New Statesman

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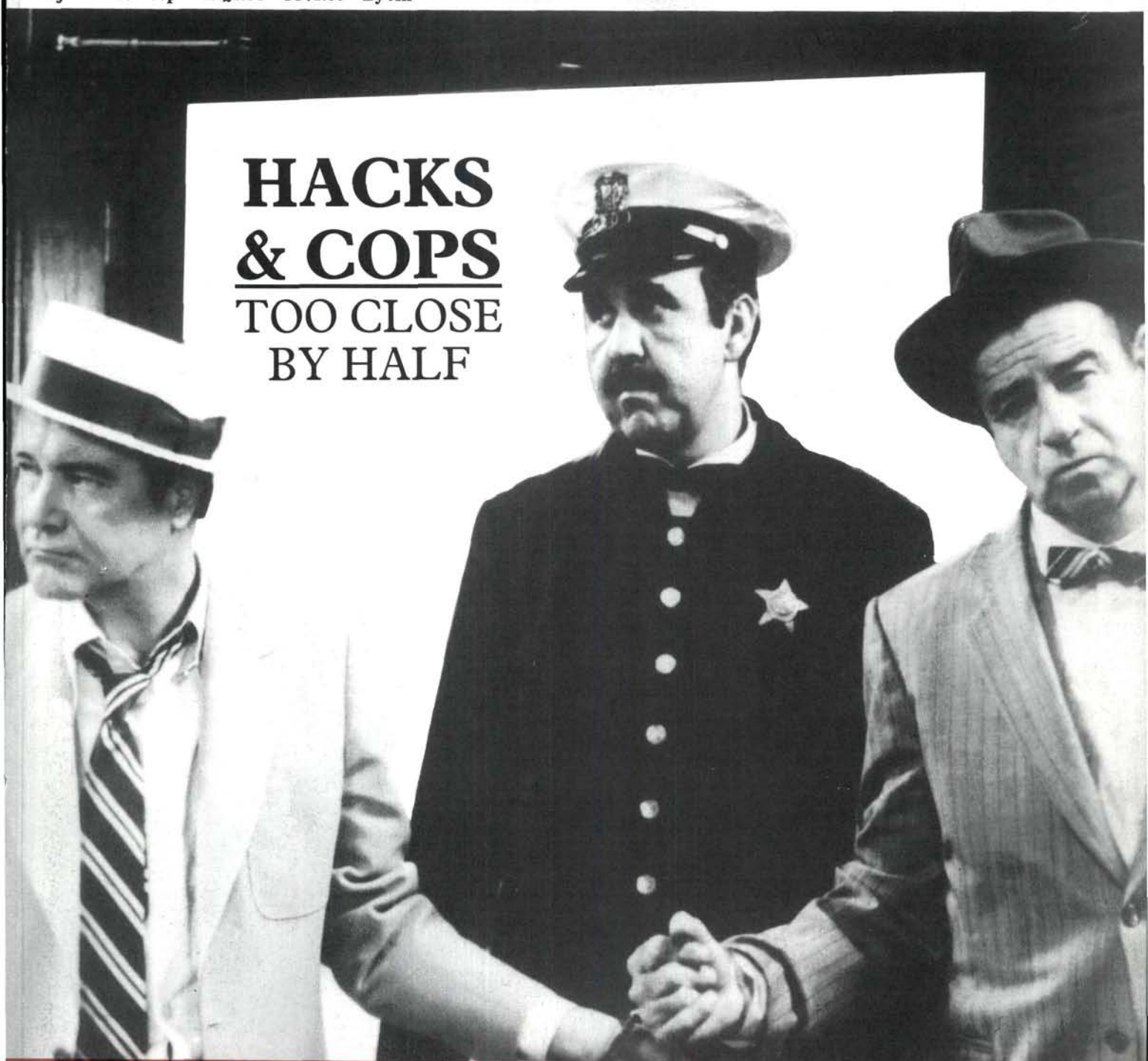

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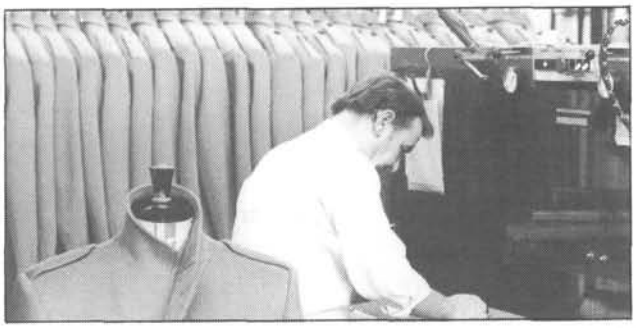

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New Statesman

Cover photo: A still from *Front Page*, starring Jack Lemmon and Walter Matthau (Kobal Collection)

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NAUGHTY BITS REVISITED

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NEW VOICES

SHEILA MACLEOD considers a selection of first novels by women

CAMPUS POLICE

A new row has broken out over letting police into schools. JOHN WRIGHT looks at the role they have played so far

IS AUNTIE DYING?

Michael Leapman's new study, *The Last Days of the Beeb*, argues that the institution might be in its death throes. PHILLIP WHITEHEAD reviews

New Statesman
Vol 111 No 2880 6 June 1986

Reagan is acting in bad faith

THE REAGAN Administration is now inflicting below-the-waterline damage to NATO. Its acts of nationalistic aggression in the Mediterranean — which since 1982 have involved the effective destruction of Lebanon as a nation and last year almost brought down the Italian government over the *Achille Lauro* affair — have demonstrated that it is prepared to do what it likes in Europe's back yard. The attack on Libya this year demonstrated that it was prepared to use the NATO machinery in Europe for a military operation about which the rest of NATO, including its secretary general, Lord Carrington, was not informed in advance.

Now we have SALT II. The Reagan Administration is trying to get the debate bogged down in questions of whether or not the Soviet Union has observed every detail of the (unratified) Strategic Arms Limitation Treaty. Mrs Thatcher, in her increasingly desperate attempts to stay in Reagan's good books, has latched onto this line of argument. The Soviets are breaking the rules, it is asserted (though not proven), so the arms control ball is in their court.

The political and military reality is quite otherwise. SALT II was agreed in 1979. Given the rate at which the nuclear arms race has been run on both sides in the intervening seven years, it is not surprising that there are areas of dispute between the superpowers. But if nuclear arms control had been conducted in good faith between Washington and Moscow in those seven years, we should long since have had a SALT III and other agreements.

The crisis for NATO is that its establishment has now come to see what has long been apparent to the peace movement and to the Left, namely that Washington has *not* been dealing in these matters in good faith. There are well over 50,000 nuclear weapons already in existence. The majority of them belong to the United States. If deterrence was the only argument, there can be no rational justification for adding *anything* to this stockpile on the American side, even if the Russians were adding to theirs.

But arguments about nuclear deterrence are not what is driving the American government forward. That drive is coming from the dynamic of the nuclear arms race itself. The limits set for the Americans by SALT II are now being reached. The Americans are up against the permitted limits on air-launched cruise missiles. The US Navy wants Trident, but to get it and keep within SALT limits would have to scrap Poseidon. The US Air Force wants 200 MX missiles, but 100 is its present SALT limit.

President Reagan's handlers clearly see that being tough with the Russians over arms control is good domestic politics. But the drive to get rid of SALT comes from the old entrenched military-industrial complex. That vested interest has already driven a coach and horses through the spirit of SALT II, when it sold the President on the idea of Star Wars. Multi-billion dollar 'research' on how to take nuclear war into space moves the arms race into a phase that SALT II did not even contemplate.

The governments of Western Europe have until now naively hoped that Washington's big stick approach to arms talks was just a good way to frighten the Russians to the negotiation table. Now the evidence is unavoidable that Washington likes the arms race for itself (and for the possibility that it will further weaken the Soviet economy). That realisation must be the beginning of the end for the post-war North Atlantic Alliance as we know it. □

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Less sex, please, we're British

IT WAS ONLY a matter of time before the Conservatives began passing laws on sexual morality. Their latest amendment to their own education bill, stipulating that sex education must be taught with 'due regard to moral considerations and the value of family life' differs, though, from previous efforts to regulate sexual affairs.

Laws on sex shops or pornography for instance, have sought to limit commercial transactions over sex without laying down the law on what should or should not be considered 'moral'. Now we have for the first time not only a legal definition of acceptable teaching on sex; we also have, with the exception of religious education, the only *statutory* intervention in the actual curriculum of schools.

For those many schools which hardly teach sex education at all — through embarrassment, hostility or lack of money — the new requirement will have little effect. It is unlikely that it will be used to monitor and reprove the Mr Gradgrinds of the biology class, whose lessons in reproduction too often stand in for sex education. But where the new law might bite is in giving statutory back-up to the existing repressive view on sex education.

It is already a rare sex education class that suggests that homosexuality is an existing and acceptable form of sexuality, or that girls too have a right to sexual pleasure which may not come about through observing the rites of moral family life. The view which Baronesses Cox and Hooper have been assiduous in promulgating, that our schools are hotbeds of left teachers propagating neo-Bolshevik ideas on free love, would be laughable in its ignorance if legislation were not founded on their prejudices.

It is fear of prejudice which will make many oppose the idea of morality being a statutory part of sex education. For the argument is less over whether morality has anything to do with the forces of sexual desire than over whose morality is to be taught. A morality which stresses that sex is alright *only* within the confines of heterosexual marriage leaves children who respond to their own instincts, the pressure of their peers or the real patterns of their elders with no moral guidance at all. Are the children of parents who are divorced, single, unmarried, homosexual to be filled with guilt at the immorality of their homes, while those observing the cruelty and neglect that can be sustained in the name of marital rights, or a proper sexual prudery, are left bewildered?

But a morality based on consideration, tolerance, self-acceptance, the limitation of ignorance, is not at all what the Conservatives are after. The potential corruption of children and children's potential as anarchic forces of disorder have frequently featured in right-wing thought, whether that is being bent towards drugs, vandalism, violence or sex. It is a pattern which, like the right to beat children in school, stems from an overriding preoccupation with upholding authority. This latest, if predictable, use of State intervention by the Conservatives owes everything to their war against agencies which undermine conventional authority and nothing to a recognition of the rights and needs of the child. It is strange that the Labour Party, in the House of Lords at least, spoke in such warm support of what is being done. □

THE WORLD'S MOST DISCREET NIGHTCLUB

is the Belladonna Club. The entrance is strongly rumoured to be in Dover Street, but no casual reveller would be able to discover it. Membership qualifications are extremely strict. Nobody who has appeared on television can join the club, and nor can anyone who has had a hair transplant. Professional footballers and Members of Parliament are not even admitted as guests. The telephone switchboard will never reveal to outside callers whether a member is present at any time, and the club's call boxes play recordings of international airport sound effects, so that members can reassure their spouses that they have been held up by yet another air traffic controllers' dispute. The waitresses are all graduates of the Delacroix Finishing School, and tipping is regarded as an insult, since all the waitresses are richer than the members they serve. The club's barman, Gustav, was previously at the Ritz in Montevideo and can mix over 14,000 cocktails from memory, including the notorious "Grim Reaper" made from vodka, green Chartreuse, and Merrydown Vintage Cider, which is the only cider served in the club. This cider is produced in limited quantities each year by a unique blending process, and each bottle bears the date of the vintage on its label. The apples used in the fermentation are all fine English apples like Bramleys and Cox's, rather than the bitter little cider apples used in those coarser ciders which appeal more to the sort of people who go into Advertising. It is available in two subtly differing varieties; Merrydown Vintage and Merrydown Vintage Dry. Diligent enquiries should lead you to an off-licence which can sell you a bottle, even if you have appeared on television.

Merrydown. Cider for the few.

An elder stateswoman goes to her rest

IT WAS A rare month on the *New Statesman* when we did not receive a succinct and firmly worded letter from Dora Russell. Whether she was responding to an article on feminism, on ecology, on civil liberties or the arms race, her views were well-informed strongly held, and firmly oriented towards the future. Although her life spanned the whole of this century, and there were few developments in the political evolution of the progressive movement in which she was not involved, she rarely sat back on the laurels which she had indisputably earned.

She herself was delighted that issues she had espoused as a young woman, especially women's rights, and a critique of mass industrialisation, should have moved from the fringe of politics into its mainstream. There was no 'I told you so' about this; merely a renewal of her quite extraordinary energy and enthusiasm for the cause. If anything, this increased as she grew older, for her horror at the waste and destructiveness of the nuclear arms race enhanced her sense of urgency at the need to change the world.

Perhaps ironically, the Cornwall which she always loved and to which she 'retired', was not a peaceful and sleepy haven for her. There was a steady stream of visitors as a new generation of feminists and socialists rediscovered her, many through her moving autobiography, *The Tamarisk Tree*. New political battles over nuclear power and unemployment loomed up and won her support. Perhaps there were only two issues where she felt herself out of tune with the modern generation. One was the readiness of today's peace movement to criticise the Soviet Union — criticisms which, at the age, of 90 could still have her bouncing up and down with rage.

And the second was the preoccupation with personal life. Although she was a pioneer of the battle for birth control and a recent guest of honour at the 50th anniversary of the Abortion Law Reform Association, she had less time for the public airing of personal feelings. Her own private life was touched with tragedy at a number of points, much of which she stoically endured while she maintained her indomitable commitment to public causes. It is her unique generosity of spirit towards those causes, and her faith that human endeavour could swing the balance against nuclear destruction, for which so many will remember and honour her. □

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Hung councils post-May elections

AHEM—BETTER GIVE AN OLD ACCUSATION A SHORT REST

THE LABOUR PARTY has lost an old propoganda weapon against the Liberal/SDP Alliance: the charge that they tend to support Tories on 'hung' councils. Labour-Alliance collaboration is now more common.
JOHN RENTOUL and ROB EDWARDS report

AFTER the May elections, about 69 of the 515 councils in Great Britain now have no overall majority, 12 more than last year (*NS* 31 May 1985). The *New Statesman*'s annual survey reveals that 22 are governed by co-operation between Labour and the Alliance, 16 are Tory-Alliance councils and (always hard to believe) 10 are Labour-Tory.

The 22 Labour-Alliance councils include 11 where Labour has taken control (by taking the committee chairs) with Alliance support, 10 where an Alliance administration has been formed with Labour support and one, Shrewsbury, where a joint Labour-Alliance administration has been formed.

'Support' on hung councils can be active or passive, and the nine examples of Labour-Tory collusion are mostly cases where the opposition party abstained on the key votes at the annual meeting to allow the ruling party to stay in power, rather than reach agreement with the Alliance.

Droop in Aberdeen

In the 8 May elections the Conservatives lost control of 29 councils — 4 to Labour, 2 to the Alliance and 23 became hung. Labour gained majority control in 12 previously hung councils, but in by-elections on the same day lost its majority on Aberdeen council, where it continues a minority administration. At the last meeting Labour was defeated by Tories and Alliance on five votes, including a plan to fly the African National Congress flag from a council building.

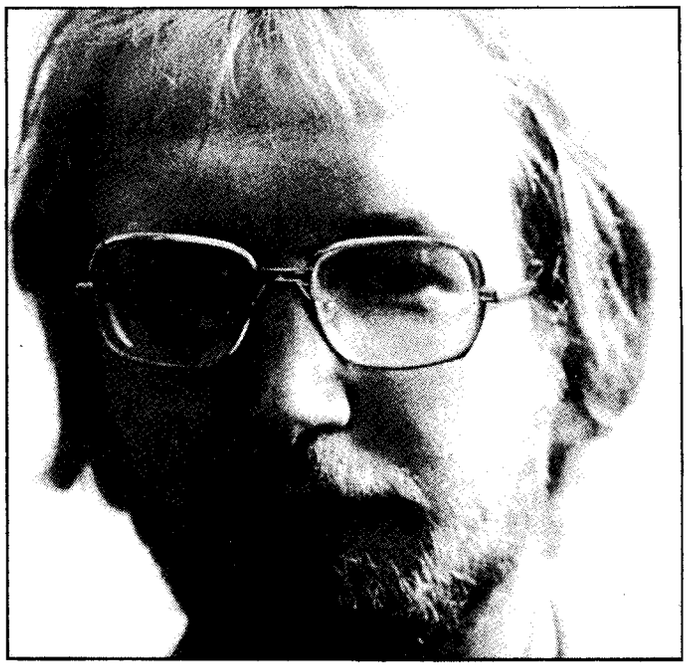
Of the newly-hung councils, the Tories have retained control in 12, usually with the support of the Alliance, although in Chorley, N Bedfordshire and Stroud, Labour abstained to allow them to hold on, and in Congleton and Woking, Labour and the Alliance *both* abstained. Labour has taken power in Tayside with Scottish Nationalist support and in Trafford with Liberal support. The Alliance has taken control in Hart with (genuine) Independent support, and in Kingston-upon-Thames and Three Rivers with Labour support. In Three Rivers a Black Labour councillor was elected Chair (the equivalent of mayor).

In councils that have been hung for some time, the budget-making crunch in March shook out five councils. In Leicestershire, Humberside and Cumbria the Alliance switched from Tory to Labour and compromise Labour-Alliance budgets were passed. In Avon Labour abdicated when its budget was overturned and in Bedfordshire the Labour Party opted out of the three-party 'representative panel' system that had replaced committee chairs.

In both cases the Tories and Alliance are working together, despite the awful warning of places like Lothian Region in Scotland, where Liberal leader Donald Gorrie put the Alliance's electoral collapse down to its perceived liking for the Tories. 'We have not succeeded adequately in countering that propaganda,' he says.

The overall picture now looks like this:

CON supported by LIB/SDP	12
CON supported by LAB	6
LAB supported by LIB/SDP	12
LAB supported by CON	4
LIB/SDP supported by CON	4
LIB/SDP supported by LAB	10
Other	21



Chris Nicholson, beneficiary of the anti-Tory alliance, the new Liberal leader of Kingston-upon-Thames, courtesy of the four-strong Labour Group

As usual, the 'Other' classification contains some bizarre stories. In Reading, which has become hung again after a brief interlude of Tory rule, Labour took the committee chairs with the support of two Tory rebels, Mr and Mrs Faud, one or other of whom holds the balance of power on each committee. In North Tyneside the official Labour Group took control with the support of the Alliance, ousting a Tory-supported Labour Against Militant administration.

In Grampian Region, where Labour is now the largest party, a coalition of 13 Liberals, 8 Scottish Nationalists and 3 Independents took the convenorships (committee chairs) when the Tories abstained at the annual meeting. ●

Peter Beaumont adds: On distinctly un-hung Richmond council, the nearly extinct Tory Party is discovering the joys of minority politics. The Alliance has taken 49 seats on the council, leaving the Tories with three.

But under standing orders, pushed through in 1968 when all 52 councillors were Tories, a minority group needs six members to be called the 'opposition'. The council's rules mean that only one Tory may sit on each committee — insufficient to propose a motion, which requires a seconder.

The Alliance has graciously waived standing orders to allow two Tories on the main policy committee, and agreed to second formally any Tory motions so that debate is not stifled. ●

Ongoing . . .

THE LATEST BATCH of 17 arrests outside the Old Bailey, including Lambeth Labour leader Linda Bellos, brings the total number of demonstrators arrested during the 'Brighton bombing' trial since 12 May to 54. Of the total only one, Jo Tully, has as yet been charged — with obstruction of the highway. Her case will be heard 24 July. The 'seventeen' have to report to Snow Hill police station on 4-6 August, when they may be charged, depending on the verdict in the Tully hearing. Picketing has been organised by Irish Prisoners Appeal, formed out of the campaign against strip-searching in Brixton prison of two of the defendants in the case, Ella O'Dwyer and Martina Anderson. During the four weeks trial proceedings the women have been strip-searched twice a day *(Terry O'Halloran)*

★

WITH AN UNFORESEEABLE timeliness, a National Lesbians & Gays in Education conference takes place in London this weekend (7-8 June) with workshops including 'Aids hysteria in the classroom', 'The ILEA Relationships and Sexuality Project', 'Heterosexism awareness', and 'Making Links: Lesbian/Gay Parents, Pupils and Educators'. For details, phone London Lesbian & Gay Switchboard 01-837 7324.

★

LONG-STANDING readers of the *NS* will have been saddened to learn of the death aged 88 of Heinrich Fraenkel, better known to them as *Assiac*, the paper's chess columnist for more than a quarter of a century. The incomparable wit and erudition he brought to chess were the product of a wonderfully rich career: as a writer on the cinema (he lived in Hollywood around 1930), as a political publicist in the German exile community during the war, as the correspondent of the *NS* in post-war Germany, and as a distinguished historian of the Nazi regime, its opponents and its victims. Like his friend the cartoonist Vicky, Fraenkel was Jewish and an habitué of the cafés of Berlin; obliged to flee immediately after the Reichstag fire in 1933, he came to love England and chose not to go back later. He wrote a book to explain this decision, *Farewell to Germany*, full of anecdotes such as the story of his arrest with Kingsley Martin by a Russian in Berlin. *(Daniel Johnson)*

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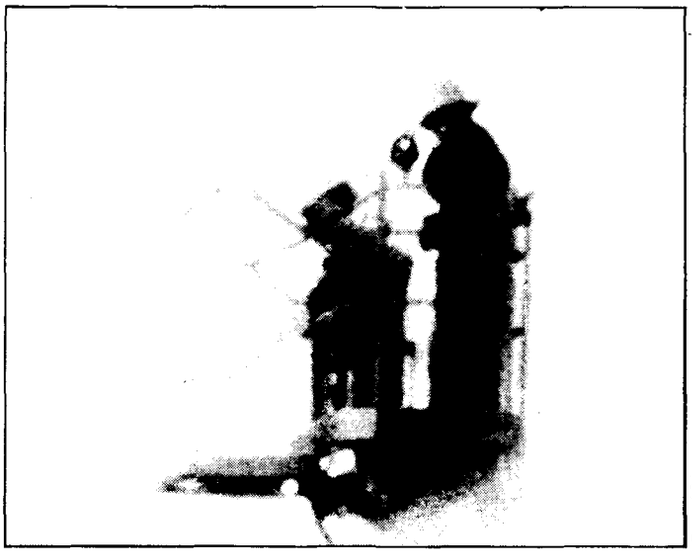
NO LET-UP YET IN THE 'UNHAPPY HACK FACTOR'

AS PRINT UNIONS examine the latest and said-to-be-final settlement offer from management of the Murdoch papers in Wapping, DENIS HERBSTEIN looks at the continuing *angst* over journalistic standards and personnel on the flagship papers



Gerard Livett

As we go to press Scotland Yard wants to find and question three men seen at the scene of this Monday's £7 million blaze at a Deptford paper warehouse used by Murdoch's newspapers — who are offering a £50,000 reward for information leading to a conviction

ALLEGATIONS of declining editorial standards despite circulation or readership profile gains, battered staff morale, and the looming threat of serious competition may lie behind Rupert Murdoch's increased £50 million offer now under consideration by the print unions. Since Murdoch bought into the former Thompson papers it has been the *Sunday Times*, with its wellnigh total clean-out of staff in five years, that has made the news (*NS* 21 March).

But now *The Times* itself is suffering from malaise of extraordinary dimensions. Its people are being lured away from secure, well-paid jobs to join the *Independent*, which only launches in the autumn and has no comparable assurance of long-term survival. The latest *Independent* recruit is Nicholas Ashford, the *Times* diplomatic correspondent, before that an excellent bureau chief in Johannesburg and Washington, and for 17 years a member of the foreign department. He is to become deputy foreign editor of the *Independent*.

There seems to be some confusion about how many Top-journos are going. *The Times* says the number is 13 at the last count, but Andreas Whittam-Smith, founding spirit and chief recruiting officer at the *Independent*, claims that 20 are already signed up. No matter. When you are *The Times* and suddenly lose political correspondent Tony Bevins, economics editor Sarah Hogg (the Lord Chancellor's daughter-in-law) chief book reviewer James Fenton, the labour editor (and 'refusenik') Donald MacIntyre and his entire staff, arts correspondent David Hewson and a floppy disc full of behind-the-scenes old hands, things start to look grim.

The new *Times* editor, Charles Wilson, hasn't yet impressed his stamp on a paper which was steered into exceptionally right-wing waters by its previous editor, the late Charles Douglas-Home (*ed.* 1982-5). He certainly intends to impress himself, but there is much doubt whether he wants to restore it to a slightly right-of-centre organ of record. That's no way to boost circulation.

Leading where?

The Times' true personality has always been reflected in its leaders, the imprimatur of Britain's (imagined) voice at home and abroad. In the now-old days, under Thomson era Rees-Mogg (*ed.* 1967-81) and first Murdoch appointment Harry Evans (*ed.* 1981-2) leaders were the work of a team of full-time leader writers, a collegiate approach where ideas and words were mulled over lovingly, providing a cohesive *Times* view of the world.

Under Douglas-Home, the 'college' was partly dismantled — certainly undermined — by the use of consultants to write leaders on special areas, foreign and home. Douglas-Home, in the words of a senior staffer, 'would grab people who were bright and who interested him and then trust them implicitly.'

See how this has affected *Times* comment on South Africa. Douglas-Home recruited Fleur de Villiers, political editor of the Johannesburg *Sunday Times* — now in London at the International Institute of Strategic Studies — to write the South African leaders. This year she has editorialised on South Africa half a dozen times. She certainly brings an expert insider's view to the subject. But it remains extraordinary that *The Times*, with a long experience of that country, cannot find an 'in-house' view, turning instead to De Villiers, who started life as a junior diplomat in the South African department of foreign affairs and all through her subsequent life as a political journalist has retained close ties with the foreign minister, Pik Botha.

Truly enlightened?

Many of the views she expresses, both in *The Times* and on British television, are a sophisticated rehash of Botha's '*verligte*' ('enlightened') reform line. Her Johannesburg paper is viewed by progressives in South Africa as a tool of the apartheid government. The biggest selling newspaper in that country, its influence is enormous.

In the 1983 white referendum which excluded Blacks from the new 'multi-racial' parliament, the 'vote yes' recommendation of the Johannesburg *Sunday Times* was crucial. The 'non-black' parliament which followed triggered off the widespread rebellion that continues to this day. (Cynics suggest that the African National Congress has much to thank De Villiers for). This is the sort of specialist opinion now appearing anonymously as the voice of *The Times* of London.

The paper employs other outside specialists on subjects like India, the law, Eastern Europe and Soviet affairs, central and Latin America, and French politics. Chief leader writer John O'Sullivan is insistent that the editor has the final say on what goes in: 'We may alter, trim as we wish, even refuse to run. But there will be times when we look at something, like it and that's that.'

Leader-writing may seem a small, but is a highly symbolic aspect of the paper. *Times*persons are sure Murdoch is worried by the persistent scale of unhappiness following the Wapping migration and the demoralisation of many of the journalistic complement of 250. O'Sullivan claims that *The Times* has been 'targeted by the *Independent*, which probably calculated that the dispute would make recruits an easy catch.'

He must be right. Even the already heavily bled sibling paper, the *Sunday Times*, is losing *new* journalists. Anne Sprackman and Roger Wilsher, hired by *ST* editor Andrew Neil as part of the new-look computerised era, are heading for the *Independent*. And the longer the losses go on, the more the print unions will be able to incorporate the 'unhappy hack factor' into their judgment of whether they can win, or at least lose honourably. ●

UK and France gnaw away at Lange's tendon

NEW ZEALAND'S Labour prime minister David Lange will be in for some political arm-twisting this week as he 'does Europe', with Mrs Thatcher and M. Mitterrand going for a pincer movement. They'll be threatening to stamp down even further on NZ's butter and cheese imports into the EEC unless Lange does a U-turn on his ban on visits by nuclear warships, and releases France's very own internationalist terrorists, locked up in NZ on *Rainbow Warrior* charges.

France is already surreptitiously blocking N2 imports on such pretexts as incorrect labelling and sanitary regulations.

The economy is Lange's achilles heel — and he's especially vulnerable to increased pressure on agriculture. Farmers have suffered most from the monetarist policies favoured, ironically, by his Labour Party. The main opposition, the National Party, is now fielding a farmer, Jim Bolger, as leader and can expect to do well in the 1987 elections in NZ's many rural constituencies.

However, France's underground testing in NZ's 'backyard' has long been a source of friction. The coral atoll, Mururoa, is threatening to split wide open and spill its contents into the ocean. There's widespread feeling that it's time Britain too stopped treating NZ like a colony.

The *Rainbow Warrior* affair only served to consolidate nationalist feeling and Lange's stand has struck a chord, even the National Party recognising that it would be political suicide to fight an election opposing it.

The more Lange resists bullying from the US and Europe, the more popular he stands to become. Thatcher *et al* may even be doing him a favour if economic failures are obscured by nationalist sentiment.

Jane Dibblin

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A breach of their own 'porn' rules by Customs & Excise?

A CUSTOMS OFFICER appears to have breached Customs' own regulations at Gatwick on 27 May by impounding gay magazines a British national was bringing back from the US for his own use.

As so often where issues of 'indecent or obscene' material are concerned the matter revolves around the Department's discretionary powers — in this instance, reasonable interpretation of the single word *'small'*. The officer's superiors are backing his judgement, for they have issued a 'seizure notice', giving the returned traveller a month in which to contest Customs' action in a magistrate's court, or abandon the goods to destruction.

'I tell you what' the traveller says (the *NS* has his name but has been asked not to print it) 'I'll carry a lot fewer mags with me next time I come back from a US holiday'. He won't try to save the magazines, for he can't face adding a court action and a chance of crude publicity to his existing woes. (Most people don't dispute Customs for precisely this reason).

He had 23 'explicit' gay male mags, a gay pin-up calendar, and a video. The video, which falls into a special category because of course it can be reproduced, isn't in contention here (though it was seized). The magazines are the point.

An internal Customs memo of June 1978 (*vide* Robertson, *Obscenity*, p194) directs Customs officers 'in no circumstances to detain small quantities consisting of single copies of obscene or indecent books' if they 'appear to be intended solely for the passenger's personal use' and do *not* include child pornography or bestiality.

We are assured there was nothing of the latter sort in the seizure of 27 May at Gatwick. The officer's action therefore turns entirely, and Customs confirms this, 'while declining to comment on individual cases', on whether 23 magazines — with no indication that commercial resale was intended — does or does not fall within a reasonable understanding of the term 'small quantity'.

Hence the sufferer's gloomy memo to himself to carry very, very few such mags with him in future. So far, one up to Customs, who have frightened one fellow-citizen into 'mending his ways' without his having any very realistic option of testing their behaviour in court.

Oy, what about 'im?

We aren't running a vendetta against Bernard Levin (*NS* 23 May) much as it might please the NUJ and SOGAT in their struggles with his employers on the Murdoch press, but he now inadvertently backs into the story.

On 30 May, three days after the Gatwick incident, *The Times* published an article by Levin in which he said he recently brought 'a pile of American pornographic magazines' into the country on behalf of a friend who wanted them as 'research material for a forthcoming book'.

He admitted it for the admirable purpose of saying that he'd looked into the magazines — intended for male heterosexuals — and found them 'unmistakably composed of a deep, inevitably aggressive, desire to degrade women'. His liberal views against censorship had taken 'a relentless, powerful and unexpected battering'.

City Syndication

The answerable minister, Peter Brooke - statement soon, please

The Gatwick passenger, whose seized mags certainly didn't, in the nature of things, degrade women, had been a model citizen and gone through the Red ('something to declare') channel in order to pay duty, which he did, on a compact disc-player.

We haven't enquired from Levin whether he went through the Green ('nothing to declare') channel when he brought his friend's 'hetporn' into Britain from the USA, for it makes no difference to what follows: a raid on his home, or his friend's, surely, by Customs officers sometime in the next few weeks.

A 'pile' (Levin's phrase, though perhaps a very loose one) of 'hetporn' — again no child pornography or bestiality — doesn't sound like a 'small quantity' as now rigorously defined, since 27 May, by Customs. And Customs is required and empowered, if it believes a 'smuggler' has breached its prohibitions, to pursue the goods into any premises in which they have wound up within the UK.

It is further open to Customs to bring a charge of conspiracy if any two persons have agreed to bring allegedly 'indecent or obscene' material into Britain. But we wouldn't wish that on anyone.

Andrew Lumsden

MISCELLANY

While we wait for rushed Tory legislation to allow cops into the Cabinet Room next time a Heseltine feels he's not being allowed to say his piece

The Lord is my . . .

Eyebrows went up this Monday to see right-wing Labour peer Lord (Is My — no, actually Malcolm) Shepherd set off the Tory educators' revolt which forced the Gov to back-pedal on its Education Bill amendment intended to guarantee, with water-cannon if necessary, Far Right freedom of speech on campus. Why not Annan? Who Shepherd? Well, it's one of those Labour dynasty tales which so astound teenybop recruits to the Cause, who thought only Tories had reach-me-down bicameral potency.

. . . Shepherd

Hero of the hour Shepherd is the son of a Labour national agent elevated in prehistory (1946) to become Attlee's chief whip in what was then an untelevised, which is to say defunct, chamber. Socialist ermine was then hereditary. Malc in turn rose from the ranks (of peers) to giddy years as Labour leader in the Lords (1974-76). He's deputy chair of the late Rudi Sternberg's (sorry, Lord Plurenden, Wilson creation*) Sterling Group, and was chair of National Bus 1979-84. Good egg on buses, though: he fought a lordly battle last summer to stop it being carved up and its pension scheme mangled by the indescribable little commoner Nicholas Ridley.*

Peerless rejoinder

MinDefballs: 'There is no question that everyone is on the same side in this matter' — Lord Trefgarne, minister for defence procurement, *Newsnight* 29 May, as the fat v thin ships row split his ministry down the middle.

A star is aborted

Not that all is well in the split department over at the Morning Star. *Journalist Graeme Atkinson has been sacked for exposing on C4's* 20/20 Vision *an offer of £100,000 by the Bulgarians to track down a Soviet defector. When Atkinson appealed to Ernie Greenwood, his NUJ rep at the* Star, *he was told that if his colleagues had anything to do with it he'd be 'lynched'. NUJ HQ is backing a suit for unfair dismissal.* Fact: *the etymological root of 'silly bugger' is 'silly Bulgar'.*

Po-faced ruling

Unabashed at having his life sentence on alleged 'soccer hooligan' Kevin Whitton reduced to three years on appeal, Judge Michael

Argyle is at it again. A former lance-corporal in the 7th Queen's Own Hussars, Philip Routledge, appeared before him on firearms charges last month. The septuagenarian judge told him: 'You are very lucky to come in front of me. In 1944 I led your regimant across the River Po. The regiment is standing by you. Try to get a job.' And let him off with a six-month suspended sentence.

Phew! What a bloomer

Well that should teach the Collection Can to blow its trumpet. The oil price has dropped, as the crystal ball said it would, but oil shares have steadfastly refused to budge, and BP . . . well our sell recommendation would so far have lost you 1 per cent on your money. After this terrible reverse, our tipster has been soundly beaten, but still advises you to hang in there on BP (as brokers Grieveson Grant point out, refining margins are being squeezed), and also turn to buying Redland (the building materials firm) — tho' some may be feeling the pinch in this rather thin market, this lot should weather the storm. Profits (if any, ho, ho) to Shelter.

Phew! What a Zionist

One person who knows all about making money from share dealing is one Gerald Ronson, the petrol station millionaire. At one of the stops on the blessed Margaret's tour of the promised land (trans Israel) last month, he provided what the *Guardian*'s James Naughtie dubbed 'a moment of toe-curling banality'. Speaking at the foundation ceremony of a school he has endowed, Ronson spoke of his own good luck in making so much money, and hoped everyone else would be able to do the same. Perhaps his enthusiasm distracted him from thoughts of a prosecution he might have to face after some rather peculiar goings on around the BT share issue (see *NS* 17 January). At the moment the DPP's file on the matter resides deep in the bowels of the DTI, and nary a word has been heard for months.

Reptile

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SCRUTINY

A WOMAN'S PLACE IS IN THE HOSPITAL

RESEARCH into an abortion pill has been cut short because of a technicality in the law. ALISON FRATER explains why the DHSS has stopped trials of a new drug

EARLY results from tests at John Radcliffe hospital in Oxford on a drug called Epostane suggest that it could dramatically reduce the need for anyone to have a surgical abortion.

The women in the Oxford study group, all less than seven weeks pregnant, were given the drug and then sent home. Most had the heavy period of early miscarriage 4-7 days later. The side-effects were less serious than other abortifacient drugs or surgical abortions. Apart from the low cost of inducing abortion in this way, early abortion could help offset the emotional trauma.

But when the DHSS found out about the research it ordered the tests to stop, because the Abortion Act requires that 'any treatment for the termination of pregnancy must be carried out in a hospital . . . or in a place approved by the Minister or the Secretary of State.' The DHSS concluded that a woman's home was not an 'approved place' — and the chances of getting approval from Roman Catholic Health Minister Barney Hayhoe are slight.

As a result, the drug company paying for it has taken the research abroad, and the treatment may never be made available in this country. Even if the drug were to be approved for use here based on tests abroad, the Abortion Act would require women to wait in hospital until the abortion happened, denying them the privacy and safety which the treatment appears to offer. (The late abortions prevalent among young women are so often the result of a concealed pregnancy.)

NHS prejudice

Only half of the 130,000 women seeking abortion every year manage to get help from the NHS. In the Northern health Region, only 28 per cent get NHS help. Women are forced to go private or to charities, paying £100-250 because of delays, prejudice or lack of resources in the NHS.

Some hospitals have restricted 'catchment areas', many won't help someone who's had an abortion before, and most have a 12-week limit — although the legal limit is 24 weeks. In few other medical services are waiting lists so inappropriate, yet in some places women are waiting up to 30 days for an abortion. No one wants to terminate a pregnancy, but everyone agrees that if it's necessary, the earlier the better.

All these problems could be overcome by a safe drug for early induced abortion — blocked by a legalistic reading of the Abortion Act. But trying to change the law might involve bringing the Act back to parliament. In the present political climate most supporters of abortion provision are unlikely to risk it. ●

Alison Frater is co-author with Catherine Wright of Coping with Abortion, *Chambers*

UPP

Barney Hayhoe: a dull, male and Roman Catholic* politician (*of the non-'liberation' variety)

More good housekeeping

THE GOVERNMENT has finally admitted it got it wrong on NHS charges for overseas visitors. The charges, which are ungenerous in spirit and racist in effect, are raising just 30 per cent of the government's original estimate.

Brought in by then Health Minister Norman Fowler in 1982, the charges were supposed to halt misuse of the NHS by foreign visitors coming to the UK specifically to exploit our 'good Samaritan' policy of treating freely anyone who fell ill while in the country (though in fact, no evidence of such abuse was ever presented), and to raise an estimated £6 million a year in revenue.

But questions tabled in the House of Commons in the last month by Liberal health spokesperson Archy Kirkwood reveal that during 1984-85, only £1.8 million was collected. Furthermore, this is the gross figure, as the Minister claimed that 'the administrative costs associated with the collection of income are not separately identifiable.'

All the old criticisms of the charges are therefore revived — unnecessary, costly to administer, and likely to cause offence to those patients — such as Blacks — who might be suspected of being 'foreign'.

Health Minister Barney Hayhoe gave three reasons for the lower figure (though in fact 12 Health Authorities are still refusing to apply the charges): exemption for overseas students, a possible shift of patients towards the private sector, and 'the imposition of charges is likely in itself to have limited the demand for elective treatment.' You mean, Minister, that if price goes up, demand goes down? Don't Tories understand market forces?

Duncan Brack

Politics of envy

Nice one, Nigel

THE CHANCELLOR has only to see a presentational banana skin to put his foot firmly on it. The abolition of tax on lifetime wealth transfers in the Budget seemed to allow the rich to pass on their wealth completely tax-free.

It provoked apoplexy in these pages, and Labour MP Dale Campbell-Savours nearly wept in the Commons as he described the poverty in his constituency and begged the government: 'Please don't do it.'

But are the rich pleased? They are not. The Duke of Devonshire's solicitors wrote to the *Financial Times* last month to complain that the new tax rules were unfair on family trusts. And the accountancy profession has protested that the Budget proposals are 'illogical, complex and will result in some people paying more tax.

The trouble is that, to avoid previous rather feeble capital taxes, the rich have stashed an awful lot of money in family trusts, and Nigel Lawson intends to go on taxing these, and anything taken out of them, under the old Capital Transfer Tax rules. These aren't exactly onerous, starting at the rate of 15 per cent on transfers over £71,000, but they will operate, according to the Duke's lawyers, Currey and Co, 'unfairly and arbitrarily on families who have been influenced to order their lives by principles clearly laid down by this and previous governments'.

But the Chancellor is still giving away £35 million this year and £55 million next, according to the official estimate of the effect of the changes on tax yield — mostly to the very, very rich. And the loss of future tax revenue caused by wealth transfers between now and the next general election is likely to be much greater.

John Rentoul

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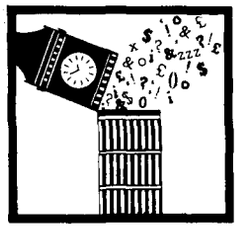

Can the future work if people don't?

PETER KELLNER

WILL FULL employment ever return? Until 1983 most people on the Left regarded it as an article of faith that full employment *must* return; that there was nothing except misguided government policies to prevent the objective from being reached; and that a future Labour government must achieve it as quickly as possible.

Unfortunately, that year's Labour election manifesto was considered incredible on this issue as on others. It stated that 'our central aim will be to reduce unemployment to below a million within five years of taking office'. Hardly anyone believed that this target could be reached.

A few months later, Roy Hattersley became deputy leader and shadow chancellor and he has carefully diluted that promise. At the next election Labour is likely to promise no more than a reduction *by* a million, rather than *to* a million.

As a contribution to Labour's new realism, Hattersley's approach has much to commend it. It does, however, leave nagging doubts. Surely Labour ought to be more ambitious on behalf of the jobless? Has the party jettisoned one of its historic goals? Will full employment ever return, or must we adjust to a society in which mass unemployment is here to stay?

Because Labour's leaders are preoccupied with winning the next election rather than the one after that, long-term economic prospects have not figured prominently in Kinnock's or Hattersley's speeches. They feel, with some reason, that it is more important to devise an emergency recovery programme that will win votes and will work. But that strategy leaves an awkward gap in Labour's longer term prospectus. In particular, it means that the party has not yet developed a response to an increasing body of thoughtful left-wingers who doubt whether full employment in the traditional sense is capable of being achieved ever again.

Their argument has never been put so eloquently as by Barrie Sherman in *Working at Leisure**. Sherman was for many years director of research for ASTMS and has sat on more Labour Party committees than is good for any sane individual. In a book refreshingly free of jargon and dogma, he dissects the prospects for employment in Britain over the next 20-30 years and comes to some stark conclusions. If he is right, the implications for the Left are profound. If he is wrong he deserves a fuller response than the assertion that mass unemployment can be cured by a dose of reflation, a twist of exchange controls and a dash of import quotas.

For the argument concerns not just the employment statistics. It is about the uses and limits of economic policy, about the industrial and social implications of modern technology, about the lives of people whose skills can be replicated by machines and about Britain's capacity to survive as a significant industrial power.

SHERMAN's forecasts are bleak. Looking to the first decade of the 21st century, he sees few sectors employing more people than they do now. Gains in productivity, as advanced technology creeps into every crevice of the economy, will outstrip increases in demand. So fewer and fewer people will be needed to produce more and more.

Sherman anticipates employment in agriculture, forestry and fishing declining by one fifth to 260,000; in energy and water supply by one third to 400,000; in mechanical engineering by two fifths to 450,000 and so on.

These estimates follow trends that are already well established in Britain's older industries. But until the late 1970s, the falls were offset by gains in three main areas: public employment, modern private industries and private services. The essential reason why Sherman's overall forecast is so gloomy is that he no longer sees these sectors continuing to need more workers.

Thus Sherman expects employment in education to decline by 400,000 to 1,250,000 as administration becomes more computerised and teaching machines become more widespread. He foresees an even more dramatic decline in health and social service jobs — down by one third to 1,200,000 — as modern technology takes over clerical and ancillary work. Public administration is also expected to need one third fewer employees: 'This sector is *par excellence* the "shuffler" of information and is very vulnerable to job loss, especially among women', writes Sherman.

High-technology industries, he believes, will become victims of their own success in terms of job opportunities. The electronics industries currently employ just over 700,000 people. Sherman sees this figure rising to 750,000 in the short term, but then robots will take over many routine operations. His estimate of the number of electronics jobs in 20 years' time is 500,000.

The impact on different service industries will vary. Wholesale and retail distribution currently employ about 3 million people. Within 20 years, Sherman believes that automatic stocktaking and warehousing, home shopping and automatic checkouts will reduce the number of available jobs by half. Banking and insurance — one of the most significant private job-creation sectors of the seventies — have already stopped adding to their payrolls. This is a prime example of a maturing high-tech industry, which will continue to provide ever more varied services but need fewer people to handle them. Sherman expects employment to decline by almost half to 400,000.

Is there anything to lighten the gloom? Sherman sees just four sectors that will avoid substantial net job losses — two where employment levels will remain roughly static and two which will grow. Hotels and catering should continue to employ about one million people: this will remain a labour-intensive industry and Britain, terrorist scares permitting, will continue to be attractive to foreign tourists. And the motor repair industry will continue to need about 200,000 people. Individual motor components should become more reliable — but there will be more of them to go wrong; the two trends, Sherman believes, will broadly balance out.

The two growth industries that he sees are personal services (such as lawyers, barbers and window cleaners) and recreation and tourism. Both will remain labour-intensive and, in both, growing demand will outstrip productivity gains. But together they employ only 600,000 now, although that figure is projected to rise to 1.1 million over the next 20 years. The half-million job gains in these sectors will offset fewer than one in 12 of the jobs lost elsewhere in the economy.

Sherman believes that the future need not be quite so harsh for job-hunters if Britain takes advantage of some of the particular advantages that new technology will open up. For example, information technology is likely to lead to an unmanageable explosion of data. A new industry of information handlers and brokers will open up; 'experts will be needed to prepare and update the databases and retrieve the information that clients will want', he writes. 'It is most likely that the international nature of this flow of knowledge will dictate that a single country takes the lion's share of the total world market. For many reasons, among them the use of English as an international language, the lack of constraining legislation and a large pool of skilled workers in this area, the UK must be a firm favourite to succeed.'

Otherwise, the central task facing governments over the next two decades will be to help people adjust to the growing compulsory leisure that a high-tech economy will impose on us. Sherman's arguement is cogent, serious and well marshalled. I also think it is wrong, and next week I shall attempt to explain why. □

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'EVIL BEYOND BELIEF'

DUNCAN CAMPBELL of *City Limits* on Scotland Yard's tame lobby correspondents

VICE SQUAD POLICE raided the Streatham home of Cynthia Payne last Friday night. She was having a party to celebrate the end of the filming of the story of her life as a 'madam' — *Personal Services*, in which Julie Walters stars.

The press, cameras at the ready, just happened to be on hand. Cynthia herself was photographed giving a cheery two fingers as she was escorted away by the police. (The arrest of a woman by 30 vice squad officers must come as a massive relief, if you'll pardon the expression, to everyone worried by the violence on the streets, the increase in rapes and the escalating burglary figures.)

Now Cynthia was the third major 'crime' story to feature on our front pages in the space of a week. The previous two concerned Ann Lock, the missing LWT production secretary, and the discovery of a 'gay sex killings' address book.

Ann Lock's husband, 'a wealthy butcher', Laurence Lock was photographed and quizzed daily by press people camped outside his house. 'I have to ask you — "did you do it?" ' inquired one.

The 'gay sex killings' story had the added frisson of famous names or as the *Express* put it — 'Stars in Murder Quiz'. The stars so involved — Lynsey de Paul, Kenny Everett (only a cheapskate would note that both were involved also in Mrs Thatcher's showbiz electioneering team in 1983) and various others — were connected to the inquiry because their names were alongside 700 others in the address book of a man charged with four murders.

What links the three stories is that they all require close co-operation between police and press. How lucky for the hacks in macks who were outside Cynthia Payne's house just as a 'blonde leaves Madam Sin's' and what bad luck on that drizzly evening that Julie Walters — or Kenny Everett even — hadn't turned up.

The names of the great and the near-great, as Mel Brooks calls them, which passed from the address book which police were holding into the press, were 'not knowingly involved in the web of murder' the *Express* assures us. But that doesn't mean that photos of them can't appear on half a dozen front pages.

'Wealthy butcher' Lock wasn't a name before 'TV girl' Ann disappeared. But he is now. And when he took part in a reconstruction of his wife's supposed last journey with the police the press were on hand to check out if he was showing sufficient sorrow and to assist the police by asking the questions that detectives couldn't ask him without giving the statutory 'everything you say' warning.

THIS IS NOT an attack on titillating crime copy. I am as fascinated by 'crime' as anyone who abandoned *Hotspur* and the *Eagle* for *True Detective* in their formative years and I take my homburg off to many of the gents in the shabby coats who have plied the trade. Detailed and conscientious reporting of murder and robbery and kidnap and vice (*real* vice) has always been and should be a staple of any newspaper.

But what we are looking at is the way in which a reporter's hand is now more often guided by their police contacts than their conscience. Percy Hoskins, the former *Express* crime correspondent, wrote in his book *Two Men Were Acquitted* that: 'I was then chairman of the Crime Reporters Association — a group of professional journalists who are to Scotland Yard what the lobby correspondents are to the House of Commons — an elite body who can be trusted with confidential information to be used to mutual advantage.'

'Mutual advantage.' For here we confront the great dilemma of the crime reporter. If you wish to ply your trade successfully on the crime front you need the co-operation of the police. You need tip-offs, backgrounders, photos of the accused or the spoils, pointers. To act without this sort of relationship with the police can mean the drying up of information and the freezing out from the day-to-day blood and guts which sell papers.

'I have to ask you — "did you do it?"'

Consequently this relationship of mutual advantage has to be built up. It can be a word in the ear outside a court. A friendly phone call that suggests one angle from which to approach a case. Or a tip-off that a raid is about to be carried out.

The police, like any other public body, strive for a working relationship with the press. They know that a friendly reporter will remain friendly if given a nice tale, just as a local government press officer strokes reporters on local papers with a bit of flattery and a jolly story about the mayor's chain.

But it can lead, in the same way that the lobby system has, to a particularly one-sided way of reporting. No, it's OK, I'm not suggesting that every police statement should be balanced by one from Villain's Liberation; what I'm saying is that too many stories now reflect what the police want them to reflect, unchallenged and out of context. Villains and their crimes become larger than life.

Unlike local government tales, though, many crime stories are uncheckable and unrefutable. For instance, a couple of years ago a man called John Goodwin was charged with a series of burglary offences and then with an attempt to bribe a jury. The front page headline of one of the tabloids during his trial was 'King of the Jury Nobblers.' And it was suggested that this is how he was known within 'gangland' (this mysterious country somewhere between Hornsey and Rotherhithe). Equally it was suggested that he possessed a fortune.

Both suggestions were untrue. The latter may have led to the subsequent kidnapping and holding to ransom of his wife Shirley. His real nickname was 'The Face', for what it's worth. He was eventually acquitted of all charges. The trial (and subsequent acquittal) of the police officers in his case who faced charges of taking money off Goodwin received rather less coverage.

Another man, Ray Baron, was, said the dailies, known as 'The Baron'. In fact, he was known as 'Little Ray'. But 'The Baron' and 'King of the Jury Nobblers' bring in the old gangland godfather flavour that we seem to lack today. The nicknames are usually bogus, invented by press, police or a prosecution counsel who has read too much Philip Marlowe.

Part of this desire for Characters comes from the collapse of 'gangland' since the hazy, Krayzy days of Ron and Reg. Evidence of this is that barely a week goes by without one of the twins cropping up in a story. Ron getting married. Reg owning up to knocking Jack 'The Hat' Vitie off. Again accuracy isn't too important as the Krays are unlikely to win a libel action. A *Sunday Mirror* reporter even managed an exclusive on a trip to Parkhurst when he told readers in breathless prose about the grey-faced Ron Kray, 'long time not the boss'. Actually, it was Reg, Ron's in Broadmoor, but no matter.

WHERE DO THE police fit in here? Steve Chibnall in *Law and Order News*, an analysis of crime reporting in the British press, quotes one 'quality' reporter thus: 'you'd get the position where there was a good story but it was also a dodgy story so it needed more than one person to run it to give it credibility. So it was put to the police: was this a possibility?. . . The police never discount anything as a possibility.' (In that case the 'story' was that the IRA planned to kidnap 10 English villagers after the Old Bailey bombing trial of 1973.)

Now a staple of the crime story has always been the Old Bailey trial. The routine today is to cover the prosecution's opening speech in which the counsel can usually be relied on to

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THE Sun
Thursday, May 29, 1986
18p
TODAY'S TV IS ON PAGE 14
£50,000 BINGO!
Today's lucky numbers page 21
I KNOW GAY MURDER CASE MAN
Zany Kenny Everett tells all to The Sun
SEE PAGE SEVEN
MY BRIDE MUST BE DEAD
Laurence Lock yesterday . . . and the pearl bracelet
Streatham, South London . . . when the police
BUST AT MADAM SIN'S
0 at night at Ambleside Avenue,
And the Mirror is there to see it
Melanie, who met Cynthia at a rubber wear do
ON THE STREET: A guest
THERE'S ALWA

For instance, the trial of two men for the murder of undercover officer John Fordham last year is a classic example. The *Sun* berated the jury for acquitting the men (Fordham had been hiding in the gardens of one of them, wearing a balaclava mask; the owner of the house had thought him an intruder and had stabbed him with a kitchen knife.) Yet the *Sun* editorial writer had not been to court throughout the trial and had missed the crucial evidence of police cack-handedness which the attentive jury believed. The police were furious about the acquittal (one of theirs had been killed). The press duly reflected that fury.

Drugs have now become an area of crime where accuracy and honesty matter little. You often read of drugs worth, say, £5 million being seized yet analysis usually shows the figure to be four or five times too high. There are lots of shadowy 'Mr Bigs' when it should be Mr Big Leap of the Imagination. It is a fact that most dealers are small-timers.

Fleet Street's massive ignorance of drugs — partly fed by some of the sillier stories emanating from Drugs Squad officers and reported often by men with alcohol-induced cirrhosis of the critical faculties — means that people attracted to or using drugs don't believe any of the cautionary tales. The scare stories become counter-productive.

THE MORE OBVIOUS forms of press/police co-operation are, of course, television programmes like Shaw Taylor's *Police Five* which works hand in gloved hand with the Yard but makes no secret of it. (And his show is popular with villains, too, in that it allows them to see what items are being searched for and therefore what not to try and sell immediately.)

Good crime reporting can be terrific and obviously it wins readers. One theory for the decline of the sales of London evening papers which the journalist Peter Paterson once put forward was the end of the death penalty — a good murder trial, a possible verdict, a plea from the dock would all have commuters queuing up to pay their twopence. And the *Daily Telegraph* has long been familiar with the way in which it can slip in tales of sex and naughtiness under the guise of a straight-faced report from the Old B. There are still 'characters' around reporting, too, like James Dickenson, known by defendants and press as 'The Prince of Darkness', because of his ever-present black mack.

But too often now they are following rather than leading the police. The links have become closer than ever. Chester Stern, the *Mail*'s man, came to the job from Scotland Yard's press office (where, it must be said, there are some decent helpful souls).

Crime correspondents should be producing their own stories as well as those that other people would like them to write. Since crime is one of our few growth industries it is even more important that it is covered honestly and without favour.

The report in the *Mirror* of the raid on Cynthia Payne said that the guests came 'sheepishly down the front path'. The problem with too much of our crime reporting today is that it, too, is sheepish, in a different sense of the word. And it isn't a sheepdog doing the herding, it's a police dog. □

provide the purple phrase — 'evil beyond belief', that sort of thing — that will make a handy headline. Then there is the chat with the officer in charge and, for some, it's hey-ho and off across the road to Bounders for a spot of lunch. Most reporters don't return until the summing-up when the judge can usually be relied on for a phrase — 'evil beyond belief', something like that — once more. It means that the context of the trial, the sub-plot, is often completely lost.

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POLITICS BY BURGLARY

BRENDAN MARTIN exposes the methods used by the Workers Revolutionary Party against opponents, now deployed by warring factions in terminal internal divisions

IT'S BUSINESS as usual down at the Clapham headquarters of the Workers Revolutionary Party — with burglaries, physical violence and arbitrary expulsions in the tradition of the sect's disgraced and expelled founding guru, Gerry Healy.

The 74-year-old Healy set up his rival WRP, with around 100 supporters, including actress Vanessa Redgrave, last October after being kicked out of the party on the grounds of his systematic sexual abuse of and violence against his young followers.

The WRP he left behind became known as the Banda-Slaughter group, after its general secretary Mike Banda and Bradford University academic Cliff Slaughter, for many years Healy's chief intellectual apologist.

The organisation should now be more aptly dubbed the 'slaughter Banda' group, for it has decided to purge Banda, his wife Janet and brother Tony, who between them have clocked up a century of full-time party service.

The new rift in the WRP has been accompanied by a continuation of the techniques used by Healy over many years to spy on other socialist organisations. Details of these activities, kept secret from most WRP members until after Healy's expulsion, have now begun to emerge in public.

For example, the Communist Party was robbed of confidential reports and correspondence by a Healy agent planted in the offices of its monthly journal *Marxism Today* in 1982. Articles based on the stolen material appeared regularly in Healy's daily *News Line* until the agent was rumbled in January 1984. By then, *News Line* had become essential reading for those involved on both sides of the struggle, which was then splitting the party, for control of the *Morning Star*. *News Line* even reported the holiday plans of *Marxism Today*'s editor Martin Jacques. Healy's close ally, former *Sunday Times* journalist Alex Mitchell, wrote a 128-page book, *Behind the Crisis in British Stalinism*, using documents and reports relayed to him daily from inside Jacques's office.

An earlier victim of the same technique was Oxford car worker Alan Thornett, who was expelled from the WRP in 1974 and then set up the rival Workers Socialist League, later known as Socialist Organiser and now publishers of *Socialist Viewpoint*. Thornett's house was broken into in 1978 and documents stolen which were used in a series of articles in *News Line* later compiled into a book, *Thornett's Clique Unmasked*. The Thornett group protested at the time that the WRP had based its information on burgled documents, a charge strenuously denied by *News Line*.

PA

The absent Gerry Healy: his disgrace has all but destroyed the WRP

Documents were also stolen from the International Marxist Group, again by a Healy agent planted inside the organisation. A letter from Thornett to then IMG leader Tariq Ali was reproduced in *News Line*.

Officially, the Slaughter-Banda group says that it is opposed to these methods. At its conference in March, 'the use of documents and material acquired by illicit and opportunist means from political opponents in the workers' movement' was strongly condemned. The conference passed a resolution which stated: 'No genuinely revolutionary organisation can countenance these methods. The WRP will win its authority in the workers' movement through open and principled struggle . . .'

Little over two months later, however, the group of academics and former Healy apparatchiks now left in charge at Clapham resorted to similar methods in their faction fight with the Bandas. Suspecting that Tony Banda was removing book stocks from Merseybooks, the party bookshop in Liverpool where he was manager until last month, the WRP leaders sanctioned a raid on the shop and Banda's office over it.

Janet and Tony Banda had been entrusted by Healy with a controlling interest in the party's main company, New Park Publications. After the March conference, the WRP central committee ordered the Bandas to surrender these shares. They resisted, unless a similar order was issued to members of the new dominant faction who also had a financial interest in the company. This was eventually agreed and solicitors were instructed to arrange the necessary share transfer.

Before this had been done, however, Liverpool supporters of the party's new ruling group reported to Clapham that books were being removed from Merseybooks. The following Sunday, when Tony Banda was out of town, a squad of party stalwarts was sent up from London to seize the remaining stocks. The raiders also went through Banda's private papers and found a notebook containing details of a meeting which he and other dissidents had held the previous week.

Banda's notes were then used to lay charges against all the participants in the meeting, most of whom, including former *News Line* deputy editor John Spencer, have since been expelled. Many more have jumped before being pushed. A spate of resignations has included that of Healy's former personal secretary, Aileen Jennings, the woman who began her then boss's downfall last summer by blowing the whistle on his sexual activities.

Mike Banda was still on holiday in his native Sri Lanka when his brother hosted the secret meeting, but he is also being kicked out for declaring that the WRP never was and never will be a revolutionary party — a repudiation of his 35 years as part of its leadership.

THE NEW ORTHODOXY down at Clapham is that although the party was 'turned into Healy's private brothel' — as Slaughter put it at the time of the first split — it retains its revolutionary credentials. This was not the view taken by its March conference, which decided that the organisation had degenerated to the point it 'was not revolutionary'.

The logic of that conclusion is that the organisation should be wound up — precisely the step recommended by Mike Banda and others now purged, whose view is that the political apparatus built up by Healy is only good for its founder's politics.

Slaughter and his allies, though, are determined to keep the show on the road — particularly now that they have gained control of the WRP assets previously controlled by the Bandas and have settled Vanessa Redgrave's outstanding claims to them.

Healy himself has not been seen in public since last October's 'Red under the bed' scandal broke. Now thought to have been reinstated to the leadership of his breakaway WRP, having been ousted earlier in the year (see *NS* 21 February), Healy is also believed to be preparing a legal action to settle which group has the right to use the WRP party name. □

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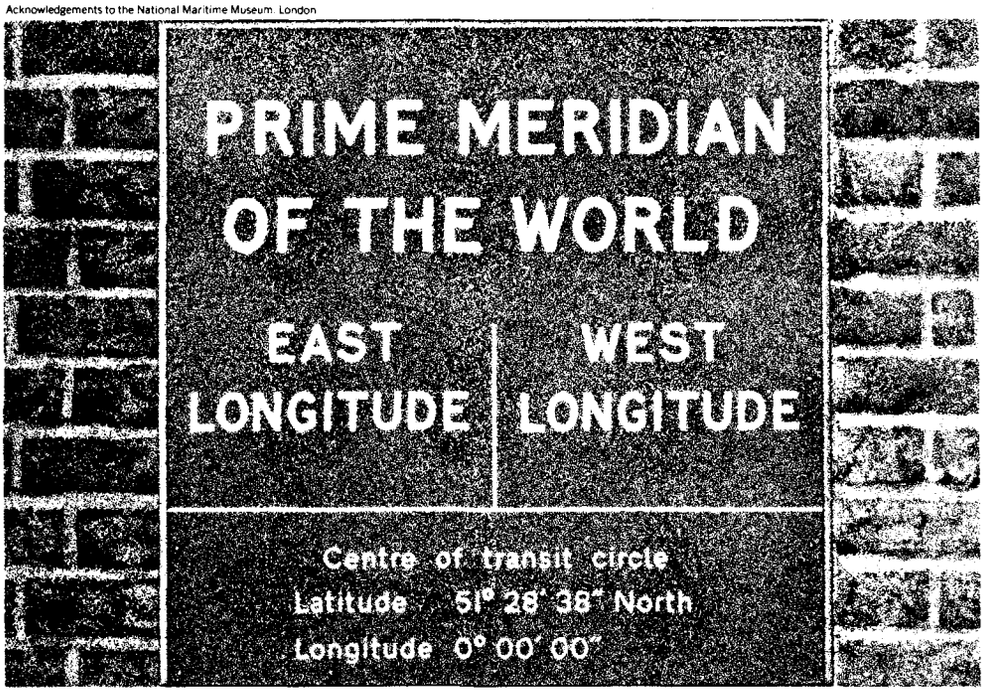
As a world financial centre, what is London's greatest advantage?

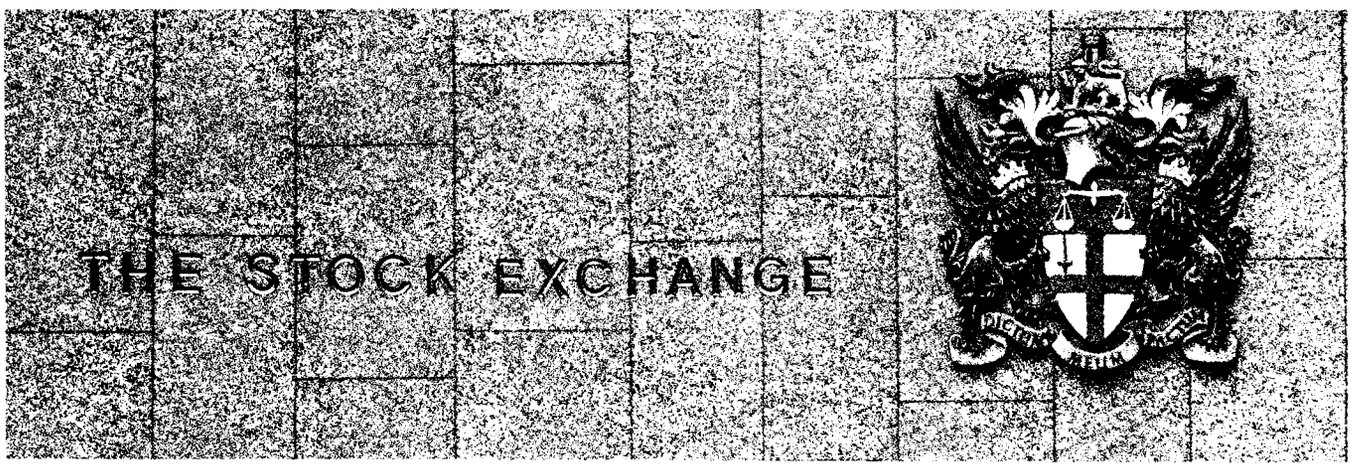
Acknowledgements to the National Maritime Museum, London



Its time zone?

Reproduced by courtesy of Oxford University Press.

Its language?



Its skills?

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PHONING HOME

Labour now looks in danger of winning the next election outright; but will it be able to reverse Mrs Thatcher's state sell-offs? We publish here exclusive extracts from a Union of Communication Workers' discussion paper which has some surprising ideas about how to 'renationalise' British Telecom

THE UCW'S WORRIES that the public and the workforce would suffer from the privatisation of BT in 1984 are already proving to be accurate.

There have been reductions in levels of service whilst charges for domestic users have risen sharply. BT now has a style of management more interested in quick profits, in boosting the salaries of senior salary grades and in imposing their will than working with and rewarding those who actually deliver the service.

The deterioration in both customer service and industrial relations strengthens the case for bringing BT into social ownership, and the UCW remains committed to this objective. But the Union's Executive Council also believes that we need to give much greater consideration to a strategy for achieving it.

Two-stage strategy

The Labour Party and the Trades Union Congress share the UCW's commitment to reversing privatisation of BT. But, however quickly it may wish to press ahead with social ownership of BT, an incoming Labour government will be constrained both by the need to meet other claims and by severe limitations on resources. Faced with the pressure to create jobs, to improve public services and raise benefit levels, it may be difficult to win the argument for a rapid re-acquisition.

On the other hand BT workers and the public will expect to see a qualitative change in the way the Corporation operates soon after Labour takes office. Therefore an approach is suggested which contains two stages: first, executive action immediately on taking power; and, second, legislation to bring BT into social ownership.

We cannot assume that social ownership of BT will be seen by the public as self-evidently justified. This will certainly not be the case if it is promoted in such a way that it is seen merely as satisfying the sectional interest of the trade unions involved. We must explain why social ownership of BT is in the public interest:

- it provides a basic utility: telecommunications services are now such an essential feature of a modern society that every citizen and each enterprise needs access as of right to them
- as the centre of the information technology economy, BT provides too important a strategic service to be left in private hands
- as Britain's largest company, it can have a significant impact on social policy and regional development, and its huge profits have serious implications for wealth creation and income redistribution
- BT's position as a major purchaser of equipment should be used in a planned way to restructure Britain's electronics sector
- because BT has a monopoly over the main network, public control is the only effective way of protecting the public interest
- existing regulatory powers held by the Secretary of State or by OFTEL are totally inadequate: ultimately BT is answerable to its shareholders rather than to Parliament

IF THE PUBLIC are to be persuaded of the need for public control and social ownership, they will need to be satisfied that it will make a real difference. Otherwise the labour movement will be accused of doing it for purely 'doctrinal' reasons. Some practical effects we could establish are:

- 100 per cent telephone installation (in turn requiring a different tariff structure)
- a commitment to more kiosks, with an investigation of a new pricing structure to make kiosks more socially useful
- cabling Britain using optical fibre cables
- development of the operator service to take on new areas of advice and information provision
- new rights for consumers which can more easily be granted under social ownership
- industrial democracy to enable workers to protect their rights and to participate in

Re-acquisition of BT

The current breakdown of BT's shares is as follows:

	Number (millions)	Percentage of total
Pension Funds	196	3.27
Insurance Co.s	240	4.00
Banks	30	.50
Other Corp. Bodies	1672	27.87*
Total Institutions	**2138**	**35.63**
Individuals & Workers	874	14.57
Government	2988	49.80
Total ord. shares	**6000**	**100.00**
Redeemable preference shares (Govt held)	**750**	
Total Equity	**6750**	

**this includes 9 per cent American depository receipts, 7 per cent on the Tokyo market and about 11 per cent held indirectly by insurance companies and pension funds*

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running the enterprise
- greater accountabilty to the public through Parliament and local government
- BT as a pacesetter for progressive employment practices on such matters as working time and equal opportunities
- integrating BT's role within a wider economic policy for investment and expansion (to include investment in infrastructure and promotion of new technology manufacturing through BT adopting a 'buy British' policy).

BT's monopoly

BT's public monopoly should cover the trunk network and all telephone lines up to and including the first instrument on a customer's premises, the first private exchange and internal wiring up to and including the socket. The network provided by Mercury should be integrated into BT's network through BT being provided with the legislative authority to acquire Mercury's assets and those of Cable and Wireless. This would leave freedom to supply, install and maintain all telecommunication apparatus other than the first instrument.

A new model of social ownership

BT should be seen as an example for introducing a new model of social ownership. Recognising that nationalisation in the past has not been attractive to either the workforce or consumers, it will be important to decentralise decision-making, establish procedures for industrial democracy and entrench accountability both to consumers and the public as a whole.

BT's existing shareholdings

A successful re-acquisition will also require taking careful account of existing private shareholders. There is a case for a stake in the company by groups most affected, and it is important that the labour movement is seen to be *extending* the opportunities for a wider spread of ownership and democratic decision-making, not curtailing these.

However clarification is needed on the relationship between *ownership* and *control*: for example, it is unacceptable that a telephone subscriber or worker who happens to own shares should enjoy superior rights over standards of service or employment conditions to one who does not.

There are 1.6 million individual shareholders, many of whom acquired their stake after the initial speculative gain. The labour movement would not want to be placed in the position of being portrayed as depriving a sizeable group of people of an investment made in good faith: our major objection was to the 'killing' made immediately after privatisation by shareholders well-versed in the ways of the market.

The UCW wish to see *every* customer given an ownership stake (perhaps in the form of a 'consumer bond') with an entitlement to a say in the direction of the company. In that way, we would be seen to be extending to every consumer rights and benefits currently enjoyed just by a minority who happen to be individual shareholders. This consumer bond could pay interest to be deducted from phone bills and it could be associated with membership of an independent consumer body with rights of consultation and representation in BT. Existing individual shares could be converted into such bonds. Rights would go with being a consumer, rather than a shareholder or bondholder: the criterion would be democracy rather than wealth.

Despite opposition from the trade unions in BT, some 95 per cent of the workforce have shares. Recognising that the share value has more than doubled since flotation, the 80 per cent of employees who acquired the full £370 of shares now have a stake worth over £740. Add to this the possible £300 issue in 1986 from profit sharing, and it can be seen that the vast majority of BT workers could have a holding worth over £1,000. This holding could increase towards £1,500 in a likely election year. Neither the Labour Party nor the BT unions can afford to be pushed into a position of 'taking' that sort of money away from over 200,000 workers. But those workers who did not accept the shares originally for principled reasons should not be disadvantaged: they should be offered a free issue of shares to top up those they will separately have received under profit sharing. All shares should then be converted to bonds and any further profit sharing schemes could produce additional issues of these bonds.

Senior management

The desire to pursue social objectives and to promote good industrial relations requires careful consideration of a policy towards senior management. BT's top managers have become increasingly Thatcherite in recent years, and may well resist change. The individuals concerned could of course be replaced; this would certainly need to occur at Chairman level. But, whatever approach is adopted towards *individuals*, there is still a need to set *general* new performance targets for mangement. These performance targets would be based upon quality of service to the public and employee participation in the business, rather than a simple maximisation of profit.

First stage

It is necessary for the senior, operational management directors to have a direct input into decision-making, otherwise effective management is not possible or real decisions will in practice be taken well away from the main Board. For this reason the UCW would wish to see explored the option of a new Board composed of one-quarter government appointees, one-quarter management, one-quarter representing consumer interests and one-quarter representing workers.

The government appointees should not be drawn from 'the great and the good'. They should ideally be full-time and should be charged with reflecting the policy objectives of the government. They should have a small staff unit of their own to provide back-up. Worker and consumer directors should also have their own support staff in units which are independent yet funded by BT and situated within the company, rather like units of political advisers.

Worker and consumer rights

New procedures for establishing industrial democracy down to local level should be recommended by the new Board for agreement with the trade unions.

The government should review the role of the Office of Telecommunications (OFTEL). OFTEL's own powers could be more effectively exercised under existing legislation. For example, it should be required to establish locally based consumer groups as part of a national structure representing consumers. At local level these would act as a channel for dealing with grievances and reflecting community views; they should be linked with local councils as well. At national level, they could recommend for government appointment and hold accountable the consumer directors.

Second stage: Compensation

Re-acquisition without compensation is not a feasible policy, nor could it be justified to our own members, let alone the wider public.

If the option of conversion from shares to bonds is adopted, then existing large shareholders could be offered a choice. Either they could 'redeem' (cash in) their new bonds immediately upon re-acquisition at the 1984 issue price of 130p (which means they make no speculative gain). Or, if they are prepared to make the long term investment necessary in the interests of BT, then they will be redeemed at the future date decided at current market value; in the meantime, they would of course be able to trade these bonds on the share market as well.

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MEDIA

Here *Today* — but gone tommorrow?

PAUL FOOT

CAN YOU SPOT the difference between these two front-page items last Sunday.?

'EXPANDING SUNDAY TIMES. The *Sunday Times* continues to expand. The latest National Readership Survey, covering the period October 1985 to March 1986, shows we now have 3,930,000 readers over the age of 15 — 7.7 per cent higher than a year ago.' *(Sunday Times,* 1 June).

'120,000 MORE READERS. Readership of the *Observer* rose by 120,000 or 5.3 per cent in the first quarter of this year compared with the same period in 1985, according to the latest figures from the National Readership Survey. In the same period readership of the *Sunday Times* fell by more than 200,000 — 5.6 per cent.' (*Observer*, 1 June).

Look really closely and you'll get it. The *Sunday Times* covers a six-month period, and the *Observer* (cheating a little) a three-month period. Which all proves that any newspaper or magazine which can't get something good from the National Readership Survey is in real trouble. The survey, financed by the industry, is chiefly of interest to advertisers who want to know what *class* of reader are buying which papers. The readership figures (themselves rather vague) are split into so many categories that there is usually something in them for everyone.

So, unhappily we can't rejoice that the *Sunday Times* or any other of the Murdoch papers have suffered from the union-bashing at Wapping. The *Sunday Times* may have lost a few copies, but recent audited circulation figures (far more reliable) suggest that the other three Murdoch papers are doing all right.

It looks as though the combined picketing and boycott at Wapping have had very little serious effect on circulation. If the *Sunday Times* is losing, that probably has as much to do with the haemorrhage of journalistic ability as with the dispute.

Must we conclude, then, that union-bashing is good for circulation? Not necessarily. To cheer us up after the success of Murdoch's papers comes the news of the catastrophic failure of the papers of that other celebrated print union basher, Eddy Shah.

Only a few weeks ago, the world lay at his feet. He was Free Enterprise Man of the Year and Marketing Man of the Year. Otherwise skilful Fleet Street journalists were writing books about his 'revolution'. Racehorses were being named after him and top businessmen were demanding his speeches at their dinners.

Even after *Today* was produced, to shouts of laughter from journalists across the country, Mr Shah could not contain his enthusiasm. On 20 April, he said *Today* was selling 630,000 and that he intended to put on 4,000 copies a day till it climbed up to the million he'd aimed at before publication.

There was no stopping him. He announced (on 28 April) a whole series of 'new newspapers', up-market mornings here and down-market evenings there with Tony Holden, sacked from *Sunday Today* when it looked for a moment as though it might have one or two good stories in it, in charge.

Now the morning after the celebrations has dawned and the hangover is awful. The circulation is falling free. One of the directors — an old friend and comrade of Shah — has been sacked for taking an extra week's holiday. Journalists who left Fleet Street, eager for the Shah Revolution (more money and more expenses) are crawling back again, with weird and wonderful stories about what it's like to work for a man really committed to Free Enterprise. Even the old moguls are more attractive than the new.

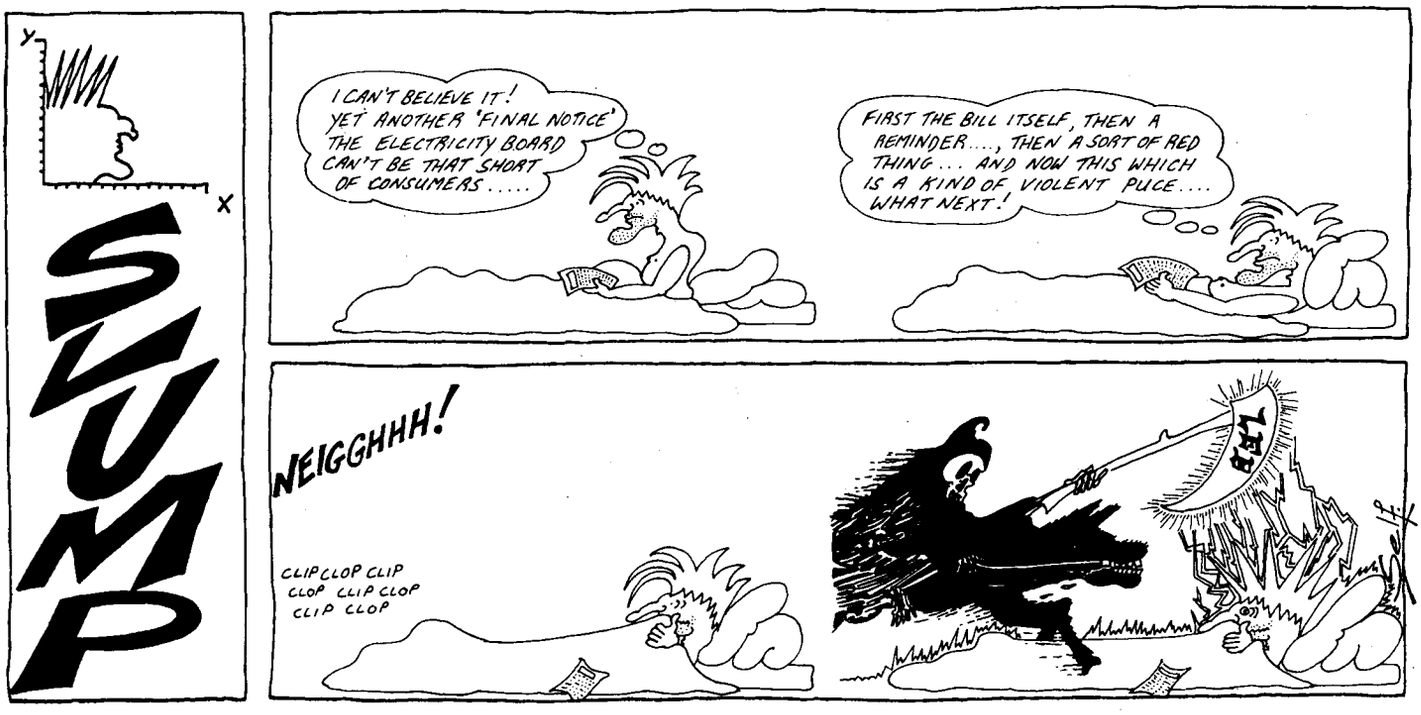
Mr Shah was very good at 'dealing with' the unions, but this didn't mean he could run a newspaper. It's not that *Today* is any worse than any of the others, it's just that there are so many others around with established readerships. There's no real reason why a new boy *with nothing new to say* should break into the market. The other proprietors pushed Eddy out into the market on a burnished throne and used his 'threat' to break up their own unions. If he falls, they will cry all the way to the bank.

The notion that the smashing of the print unions was a boon to journalism is exposed on all sides. The unions are at their weakest ever for 50 years and the journalism gets worse and worse. Each week, I think perhaps the lowest point has been reached. Each week, I am proved wrong again.

This week's nadir came on Monday from the *Star*. Its *front-page lead story* was entitled CHEERS FERGIE! I am able to reprint the entire shock, horror, exposé exclusive:

> Sarah Ferguson is having a fabulous holiday in Antigua and she wants the world to know it. When she saw *Star* reporter Ramsay Smith and photographer Ken Lennox in a local restaurant, she sent a bunch of flowers over to the table and told them: 'Enjoy your meal'. And, like the gentlemen they are, they responded by sending HER a bottle of champagne.

Can that be all? Yes. And the 'full story' is on pages 2 and 3. □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X
SUMP
I CAN'T BELIEVE IT! YET ANOTHER 'FINAL NOTICE' THE ELECTRICITY BOARD CAN'T BE THAT SHORT OF CONSUMERS.....
FIRST THE BILL ITSELF, THEN A REMINDER...., THEN A SORT OF RED THING... AND NOW THIS WHICH IS A KIND OF VIOLENT PUCE.... WHAT NEXT!
NEIGGHHH!
CLIP CLOP CLIP CLOP CLIP CLOP CLIP CLOP
HA HA

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DIARY

Ian Williams

Liverpool

I'm taking driving lessons, even though family consensus considers motorism a deviant tendency. Out of seven siblings we've one driver, my eldest brother, who's the classic exception proving the rule. At a recent funeral we nearly went into orbit around the crematorium with the cortege following, because, as he belatedly confessed, he's no good at parking.

Advertisers, with media support, have coalesced 'Motorists' into a class in itself and for itself. There's a simple technique to find a Motorist. Simply put your hand on the bonnet of a stopped car as you cross a road. The drivers who jerk in horror as if you'd just accosted them in a public lavatory are Motorists, for whom a car is a symbol of virility. They're invariably men. Most women take the sensible attitude that they want transport, not virility symbols.

I'm being forced to abandon my push-bike and join the legless classes by ill health, not motorist apostasy. Crossing rooms, I *answer* phones with heavy breathing, which is innovatory, if disconcerting for callers.

○

Sunday, my amateur driving instructor was panting with thirst and directed my movements to a city centre pub with a stopped clock which stays open all Sunday afternoon. Pleading the Eichmann alibi, I obeyed instructions. We were hungry and part of the round was two snack packs of that crinkly material usually heard during quiet and crucially sensitive parts of plays. With all the flair of one who learnt French from an HP Sauce label, I read the contents. Innocuously enough it had wheat flour, but also 'vegetable oil (including hydrogenated vegetable oil) with anti-oxidants E320, E332, Maize, Seasonings (flavourings, flavour enhancers, monosodium glutamate and sodium 5 ribonucleotide, acidity regulator E262, acid E330), Soya protein, potato starch, salt, emulsifier, E412, colours E102, E110'. And this was a *scampi* snack. 'Eat up, all those things are good for you', I was assured by my instructor. 'I used to have a chemistry set like that', said someone else, 'but it was much more expensive'.

I suppose the salt gave a tenuous marine connection for the 'scampi'. But even that alchemist's recipe sounds healthier than an *Irish* Sea connection. Chernobyl has no fears for us. We sing 'Rule Britannia, British Nuclear Fuels ruins the waves', everytime we remember Windscale — and again for Capenhurst, Heysham, Wylfa and Trawsfynnydd, all dotted like seaside piers on our coastline.

○

I overheard a plot. Since Militant called loudly for the SDP defectors to resign and fight a by-election under their true colours, why can't we insist upon expellees doing the same thing. The comrade was sternly rebuked. This was patently a *transitional* demand made in full knowledge that the demandees wouldn't deliver. It was an impossibilist attempt to expose 'good socialists'. Ah well, sighed the plotter acquiescingly, I suppose *someone* has to maintain standards.

Further episodes from the lives of the *good* socialists continue. One of the expellees was seen lurking disconsolately in the corner of a Somali-run establishment in the early hours of the morning. The Somalis have many fine features. One of them is their membership of the Black Caucus, which is why their funds were cut by the city. The other is their fierce warrior-like quality. Which is why, for sweet charity's sake, I forebore to point his presence out to mine host.

Another likely ex-member was seen in the unlikely surroundings of a wholefood co-operative. 'And he went straight to the *herb* counter', gleefully recounted one amateur witchfinder. Look after your nail clippings, Neil Kinnock, and report any novel aches and pains to your nearest thaumaturge.

○

Plots breed paranoia. In ten days I'd posted seven urgent first class letters. Not one of which had got through — even before the strike. I mentioned it to a friend who works in the sorting office. 'It's the part-timers — most of them are *married women*', he recounted angrily. I remonstrated: 'You can't complain about equal opportunities!' 'It isn't just that they're married', he bounced back indignantly, 'It's *who* they're married to. They're all bosses' wives!'

○

I meandered to London for an acronymic weekend. PR and ME. PR at the Socialist Society means Proportional Representation, not Public Relations, and it is good, they tell us. Arthur Scargill also demonstrated its goodness, while Peter Hain quibbled about the details. Those who came expecting a gladiatorial combat were disappointed. What little blood was shed was all as red as the flag, as all agreed that the present system was entirely unjust and its supporters more expedient than principled. While not convinced about the details of Arthur's scheme, I feel sure that the tabloids won't be recording his allegation that it was unjust for the Alliance to get such a disproportionately small share of the seats compared with the votes. Or that allegedly soft and cuddly Peter Hain was saying that PR wasn't enough to ensure democracy without more fundamental changes. Tabloids *only* report dog bites man stories.

○

The following day it was ME. Not the egotistical first person but the passive one, suffering from Myalgic Encephalomyelitis, aka Post Viral Fatigue Syndrome. Two hundred sufferers breathed a weak but audible sigh of relief when a slide of the enemy was flashed upon the screen. That a picture of a little cube of nucleic acid should provoke relief deserves explanation. The virus didn't have a medical qualification and knows not what it does. The patients knew what it did, some were paralysed, some were on sticks, and some were, not very sprightly, walking wounded.

Perhaps because of the high proportion of women sufferers, many doctors have blithely dismissed it as 'hysterical', even when thousands of isolated individuals who've never met develop identical symptoms. At least my sex allowed early interestingly respectable diagnoses like brucellosis, legionella, and sand-fly fever. Typically, one doctor had told a woman on losing her job after years of illness that she was really signalling her deep inner desire to bear a child.

People *die* of hysteria when faced with assumed medical omniscience — or arrogance. Which is why the sight of the cause was almost as good news as a cure.

ROGER WODDIS

Pass the SALT

(or, Groucho over the White House)

I've kidded, I've clowned,
I'm not always around —
'Is he practising jerks in the gym?'
'Where did the Boss go?'
(You bet it's not Moscow!)
I may have gone out on a limb.
They say I'm as muddled as hell,
But my mind is as clear as a bell.

Whatever it is, I'm against it,
Whatever looks good I'll call bad.
If they whisper 'Yes', I'll holler 'No',
If they want the sun, I'll go for snow.
I don't give a damn who knows it —
I'll oppose it.

Whatever it is, I'm against it,
If Gorby says, 'Cut', I'll say 'Add'.
Let the whole darn shoot go up in smoke,
Just make mine a Weinberger and Coke.
Whatever the door, I'll close it
And oppose it.

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Pacemaker

TAKING A CHANCE ON LOVE

CONOR RYAN reports on premier Garret FitzGerald's (left) surprise decision to let the Irish people vote on whether to allow divorce — and takes the temperature of the campaigns for and against

Dublin

'SHOULD THE PEOPLE vote for any form of civil divorce, the consequences would be far worse for future generations in a moral sense than a thousand Chernobyls.' This is Father Simon O'Byrne, one of the less diplomatic clerics engaged in the current debate about a plan to introduce a very limited form of divorce in the Republic of Ireland.

Garret Fitzgerald has decided to gamble on a divorce referendum after several years of procrastination. His coalition government has rushed the process through the Irish Parliament to let Irish voters decide on 26 June if they want to allow an estimated 20,000 separated couples the chance to remarry after five years of being apart. To do that, voters must overturn a provision in the Constitution's Article 41 outlawing divorce.

But the tone of this campaign — apart from the odd outspoken comment from such as Frather Byrne, later supported by Kevin McNamara, Bishop of Dublin — is much more restrained than Ireland's last more notorious referendum, which ended with a clause in the constitution giving equal rights to the 'unborn' child and the mother. The forces are certainly the same, but the tactics are markedly different. There is a realisation that the extraordinary bitterness of 1983 cannot be repeated. The scars of that experience still survive as pregnancy counselling services fear legal action from 'pro-life' groups even today.

Divorce has been outlawed since 1925. Eamon de Valera saw its prohibition as a natural conseuqnce of Catholic social teaching in the 1930s when he was writing the present Constitution.

A strong and articulate pressure group, the Divorce Action Group (DAG) has been pushing for six years for a referendum to change the constitution. An All-Party committee on Marital Breakdown recommended last year that a referendum should take place. Earlier this year Fitzgerald ordered his own Fine Gael MPs to vote down a bill for a referendum to remove the offending section of Article 41, which his Labour coalition partners had proposed. But after increased pressure from his own liberal backbenchers, the Labour Party and smaller parties in the Dail, he changed his mind as polls show around 57 per cent in favour of divorce in limited circumstances.

DESPITE THE LONG wait, the Anti-Divorce Campaign seemed to have been caught on the hop. Their frontline team is not unlike that of the Pro-Life Amendment Campaign in 1983, with William Binchy, a Dublin barrister associated with the Law Reform Commission and a veteran of the anti-abortion lobby, to the fore in TV and radio debates. Binchy turned the 1983 debate into one of legal esoterics, and there are signs that the Anti-Divorce Campaign has decided to focus on legal arguments this time. The Catholic Church has obviously been asked to keep a low profile, since Church opposition to contraception reform backfired last year.

On the pro-divorce side, The Divorce Action Group has acquired considerable experience in six years of campaigning. Chaired by Jean Tansey, formerly chairperson of Labour Women's Council, it has organised groups with remarkable ease in rural as well as urban areas, which reflects far more widespread support than might have been anticipated. However, by having to argue on an agenda increasingly set by the anti-divorce lobby — on legal niceties — the impact of its campaign on ordinary voters is often lost. Early debates have centred on technical details like succession rights, the rights of the 'first family' in the Constitution and social welfare provision which even ADC activists admit are red herrings. What they succeed in doing is moving the focus of the debate away from the real issues. The boring legal debate and the assumption by the press that a Yes majority is a foregone conclusion could result in a low turnout.

The pro-divorce campaign is also plagued by lack of cohesion as Fine Gael, Labour, the new Progressive Democrats, the Workers Party and the odd Fianna Fail TD (Member of the Irish Parliament) speak for themselves. They tend to concentrate on liberal constituencies in Dublin where marginal seats could hang on this issue; meanwhile, rural areas, where more campaigning is needed, are left barely touched by the parties.

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What the pro-divorce campaign needs to do is to highlight the facts about marital breakdown. DAG estimates 70,000 people are 'affected by divorce'; 6 per cent of the population. Others suggest it is as high as 15 per cent. In 1983 the Labour Force Survey estimated 21,000 people had separated, but that is now considered by all sides to be only half the real figure. Without 1986 census returns, where marital status was asked for the first time, the real figures are not available, though the ADC rarely dispute those of DAG. Many bigamous marriages exist; many would like the law to recognise their second family. And then there are many women who just want the dignity of living independently.

WHAT THE OPPOSITION argument comes down to, when all the legal nonsense is washed aside, is a belief, according to Binchy, that people should have a 'legal right' to form a marriage contract permanently for life: in other words, the undiluted Catholic doctrinal law. This is hardly surprising, as the movers behind the scenes in the ADC are Opus Dei, the extreme right-wing Spanish Catholic group, the Knights of Saint Columbanus, an Irish Catholic version of the Masons, and a variety of fringe groups like 'Family Solidarity', the Council for Social Concern and the Irish branch of the Responsible Society. There are, however, two surprises in the anti-divorce make-up.

The low profile of the Church so far seems tactically wise, though it is hard to see Bishop Newman of Limerick and Bishop McNamara of Dublin staying so low until the end of June. Pressure from Northern Irish bishops and the less conservative ones in the Republic who don't want to alienate either Ulster Unionists or Irish young people any further is still an important factor. A million copies of a pastoral on marriage and divorce will be distributed, but there has been a markedly lower level of theological wrangling between bishops and politicians than there was even a few months back. Last week's *Catholic Standard* even urged a much lower involvement and the *Irish Independent*, the most Catholic and rural of all national papers, surprised its readers with a full-page pro-divorce editorial. A few priests in Galway have spoken on DAG platforms with little reaction so far from their bishop. All the non-Catholic churches favour the change.

Perhaps even more confusing — and fascinating — has been the stance of Fianna Fail, the major opposition party which has been stridently anti-abortion and contraception and which now commands half the electorate's support according to polls. Unexpectedly, the party decided not to oppose a referendum, and not to instruct its TDs on what stance they should take. But their justice spokesperson, Michael Woods, reproduced much of the material being distributed by the ADC in a 90-minutes speech which included the suggestion that Frankenstein was being unleashed on Ireland in the form of divorce. The leader, Charles Haughey, spoke 'personally' against divorce. In fact, only two of the party's MPs could be found to speak in favour, and one Dublin journal reported that they had been surprised to have the party's whip urging them to do so in order than the party's 'neutrality' might be protected. The real aim of this fence-sitting is to allow urban MPs to say one thing and rural MPs another, so that in fine Fianna Fail tradition, nobody will be disappointed.

Certainly FitzGerald's Fine Gael has not been without its own problems. Education Minister Patrick Cooney, a staunch conservative, has spoken on an anti-divorce platform. And several Fine Gael backbenchers have spoken against divorce, including Alice Glenn who suggested that the effect of divorce on women would be like that of Christmas on turkeys. However, in appointing foreign minister Peter Barry, at once seen as a conservative and a Republican, to head the campaign, the government hopes to allay fears of traditionalists in the South and to soften the dislike of him felt by Unionists in the North. Another tactic by most involved in the referendum campaign to ensure that whatever the outcome, the country isn't left as bitterly divided as it was over abortion in 1983. □

HORN OF AFRICA

HOLDING A NEO-COLONY

The succession struggle in Somalia is dominated by US interests, and those of Italy and Saudi Arabia, reports CLAUDIA WRIGHT

Washington

THERE IS A JOKE circulating in Mogadishu, the capital of Somalia in the Horn of Africa. Mohammed Siad Barre, the President of Somalia since 1969, is the first dictator in the world to be run over by a bus.

Few Somalis would shed tears over the man who precipitated Somalia's catastrophic defeat in the 1977 war with Ethiopia over the Ogaden region; who abruptly switched foreign protectors by evicting the Soviets and inviting the Americans and (more recently) the South Africans to take their place; and who has escalated his differences with his critics and political opponents into a ruinous and bitter civil war that is still being fought in the northern half of the country.

But Siad Barre's misfortune may yet prove to be an even worse misfortune for the Somalis. That is, if the seriousness of the President's injuries can be kept secret and if he can be kept alive on sophisticated medical machinery in Saudi Arabia, while the US embassy, in league with the Saudis and the Italians, arranges a backstage transfer of the old dictator's power to keep the corrupt, unpopular but reliably pro-American regime from collapsing.

For the Reagan Administration there is much at stake. Its allies in the neighbouring governments of the Sudan and Egypt are under serious political challenge at home, and might lose their nerve altogether if the Americans were to lose their grip on Somalia. They need reassurance. The CIA is busy at a variety of covert operations to weaken, and if possible topple, the Ethiopian regime. The director of Central Intelligence, William Casey, dreams of avenging past losses and humiliations in the Horn of Africa, and of returning the region to the Anglo-American protectorate as it was in the days of Emperor Haile Selassie. And then there is the agreement Siad Barre signed to allow the US military use of Berbera, the strategically located port on guard at the entrance to the Red Sea and Suez Canal, across the water from the Saudi Kingdom, and within striking distance of Soviet bases in Southern Yemen.

ACCORDING TO A variety of reports, the 80-year old Somali leader was injured on 23 May while travelling in a motorcade on the outskirts of Mogadishu. The President's car was moving at high speed in a rainstorm and collided with a bus. Although Somali sources at the scene report several mysteries associated with the crash it is generally believed that the President was the victim of a genuine accident, not an assassination attempt.

Opposition sympathisers have kept close watch on the President's medical condition. For a time, he came out of a coma, but then suffered a relapse. There has been virtually no press reportage of the circumstances in the US, and only carefully screened and misleading reports on Radio Mogadishu.

According to State Department officials, who claim to be relaying what they have been told by Siad's Italian and Saudi doctors, the President has suffered relatively minor injuries. According to Somali sources, however, his injuries are far more serious, and include damage to the spinal cord, and brain damage from internal haemorrhaging.

What does appear to be certain is that the elderly President, who has suffered from chronic diabetes in the past, has lost control of both his faculties and his political power. Whether he lives or dies is now of less consequence than who is taking his place in the 'White House' of Mogadishu.

The American candidate is Mohammed Ali Samantar, the first Vice-President and Minister of Defence. Samantar has ingratiated himself with the large contingent of US military advisers in Somalia, and with Pentagon officials he has met on visits to the US. So long as Siad Barre was in control, however, Samantar himself had virtually no autonomous authority — the President controlled army units directly by purging officers and appointing kinsmen or fellow tribesmen in their place. Early this year Siad appeared to give one of Samantar's rivals, the second Vice-President General Hussein Kulmie Afrah, additional power, but he was actually pitting Kulmie against Samantar to neutralise them both.

A tense contest for the succession is under way and, at least in the early stages, General Samantar and his allies appeared to be on top. General Kulmie, whose support within the army is negligible but whose tribal base is in the Mogadishu area, appears to have been

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neutralised as an independent contender for power, while the President's inner circle, including his brother, Foreign Minister Abdurahman Jama Barre, have apparently been out-manoeuvred. Many Somali officials are reluctant to acknowledge the shift until they are more certain Siad Barre will not recover to take his revenge against those whose loyalties have suddenly changed.

Although the CIA has been seen to have been putting an unusual number of unobstrusive Black agents into Mogadishu, the Americans have not distinguished themselves in their comprehension of Somali politics in the past. The Italians, who overran the country militarily a half-century ago and have now taken over economically, together with the Saudis, liberally bribing the political elite as an insurance premium against the emergence of a radical, leftist regime, are both more expert on Somali affairs.

The Saudis have also taken out the additional insurance of discreetly supporting the Somali National Movement, the least left-wing of the two opposition movements fighting against Siad Barre in the north. The SNM raises funds in Saudi Arabia, and is well-organised in the Somali expatriate communities in London, Rome and Washington. The Somali Democratic Salvation Front is the other major opposition movement and guerrilla army, and in the past it has been closer ideologically to Ethiopia and Libya than the National Movement.

Leaders of the Somali opposition say that if Siad Barre fails to resume his political power, the struggle within his inner circle will be irrelevant. 'The real challenge', the opposition leaders say, 'is from us.' Representatives of the two main opposition groups and guerrilla armies have been meeting for several months to resolve their internal differences; so far, they have told the *NS*, a formal agreement has not been signed, but 'the spirit of co-operation has increased.' The opposition leaders believe that if Siad Barre goes, 'we are strong enough to challenge the regime. We have the backing of the greater part of the population and enough men in arms to bring it down.'

US officials confirm that opposition gains on the battlefields of Northern Somalia, and economic collapse in the south, have already forced Siad Barre to arrange secretly with the South African government to provide loans for new weapons shipments, and former Rhodesian mechanics and pilots to operate Somalia's Air Force. The bulk of Somalia's military assistance is provided by the US and Italian governments.

The Somali opposition has pledged to restore democratic freedoms in the country, and end the links with South Africa. There is considerable ambiguity on the question of the US base at Berbera; some National Movement officials say they would honour Siad Barre's agreement because it also provides a US guarantee to protect Somalia from Ethiopian attack. Others, especially from the Salvation Front, say foreign military bases would have to go and the US base agreement would be cancelled. At the same time, in contacts with US officials the opposition leaders have tried to convince the Americans they 'have no bone to pick with either superpower', and that they are 'nobody's puppets.' □

THE GANDHI IMAGE

TARNISHED ALREADY

Indian premier Rajiv Gandhi seems to be hiding something, says AMRIT WILSON

WITH HIS PR department working wonders, Rajiv Gandhi was being hailed in India last summer as a boy-wonder — dynamic, modern and totally honest. A year later, things have gone seriously wrong; the PR is no longer working and Rajiv is being seen at home as ineffectual, politically insensitive and what is worse, a man who has something to hide.

His critics include women's organisations, civil rights group, religious minorities all over the country and the Left generally (which is angry about the enactment of repressive and reactionary laws and the dismantling of democratic structures). But even more worrying for Rajiv, big business interests who have been subjected to 'raids' apparently motivated by vindictiveness rather than anti-corruption and even senior members of Rajiv's own Congress(I) party who see him as high handed and harsh with colleagues are now giving him short shift.

The most consistent feature of Rajiv's behaviour seems to be crudeness and a contempt for people's intelligence which meant that even his attempts to woo sections of the electorate have backfired. Last month, in a blatant attempt to hold on to the Muslim fundamentalist vote, he pushed through parliament a bill which effectively abolished alimony for Muslim women. The reaction, however, was anger not only from women's organisations and progressive Muslims, but also from conservative Muslim strongholds like Lucknow in Uttar Pradesh where people said that they would refuse to be bought by these cheap measures — they had other scores to settle with the government.

His attempts to rid the country of 'terrorism' have proved even more disastrous. They have had the effect (even according to Congress(I) politicians) of strengthening Khalistani separatists. A second raid on the Golden Temple in Amritsar was carried out on 1 May this year. An act of stunning insensitivity, it was also uniquely ineffective. It led to the death of a child and the recovery of one gun and according to the police the arrest of 'not a single known terrorist'.

IF THESE AND other blunders have weakened Rajiv's position, he is now caught in even deeper waters over the suppression of information. On 15 May the government assumed power through an ordinance to prevent the laying before parliament of reports of Commissions of Inquiry, mandatory since 1952. Official inquiries which are regarded by the government as a threat to the integrity of India and the sovereignty of the State or which are seen as not conducive to the public interest or friendly relations with a foreign state can now be kept secret. It is no coincidence that the results of two major inquiries which concern Rajiv Gandhi personally were about to be published.

The first is the inquiry of a Commission set up under Supreme Court Judge Ranganath Mishra after public pressure following the anti-Sikh riots in the wake of Mrs Gandhi's assassination. An inquiry into these riots had originally been refused by Rajiv Gandhi with the comment in January 1985 that 'We don't think it will help at the moment. It would raise issues which are really dead.' But by April last year after the publication of independent inquiries which implicated Congress(I) members in the riots, Rajiv at last gave in to pressure.

The Commission was set up but with a strictly limited brief. It was not asked to find the guilty or punish them but only to inquire into whether there had been any 'organised violence'. Soon after witnesses started being called, Justice Mishra banned the publication of proceedings. Now the new ordinance means that even the findings of the Commission (ie whether there was organised violence or not) is to be kept from the public.

The other report to be suppressed by the ordinance is, if anything, even more significant for Rajiv Gandhi. It is the result of an official inquiry into Mrs Gandhi's assassination. The trial of her alleged assassin late last year and in early 1986 has already brought to light a number of inexplicable and disturbing facts. These include, as defence lawyer P. N. Lekhi wrote in February, 'A post-mortem report — first ever in the annals of Indian criminal procedure without a reference number [the reference number is given by the person who authorises the post-mortem]; administration of 15 units of blood to Mrs Gandhi and her post-mortem [supposedly taking place] simultaneously; a straight line in the ECG as proof of a functioning heart; a forged entry in the post-mortem register, and what's more, in the space provided for some other date, not 31 October [when she was killed]; bullets taken out allegedly from exit wounds but without human tissue, fluid, blood or bones; and weapons supposed to have been handled by Satwant Singh the assailant, and allegedly fired by him, but without his finger-prints.'

More disturbing still for Rajiv's supporters is the fact that he and his wife Sonia Gandhi were called as witnesses by the defence but didn't appear. The judgement delivered in the case earlier this year has meant that while Satwant Singh has been found guilty he cannot be executed but will be kept in prison.

Last week Singh filled a writ petition over the suppression of the official inquiry into Indira Gandhi's assassination. It was rejected by the Delhi High Court but revealed that the Commission of Inquiry had itself approached the government recommending that the results of their inquiry be kept confidential. This latest development only serves to consolidate the atmosphere of intrigue, dishonesty and involvement in serious crimes which hangs round the ruling clique of the Congress(I). □

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LETTERS

Tribute to a critic

Gavin Millar, London N1

I can't be the only one to lament your asking John Coleman to take his talents elsewhere. For a quarter of a century he has been informed, entertaining, idiosyncratically literate and never pretentious about the cataract of movies pouring down on his head every week. As a former weekly critic myself I admired his stamina, common sense and good nature in the face of so much rubbish. I marvelled at the vivid comprehensiveness of his descriptive writing, while I was labouring over an impressionistic aphorism or two which never got near the thing. Then his description of a piece of French chic as 'absolute *Elle*' remains one of the best two-word dismissals in the business. As a film maker I admire his knowledge of the craft, a skill which many critics don't bother to acquire, preferring to rely on the superior comforts of ideology, prejudice or fashion.

Well, it's the *NS*'s loss. But I dare say it dismayed others too that you let him go without a word of thanks or farewell.

Women battle for local control

Sue Finch, London N16

Can Mary Chamberlain (*NS* 9 May) really think that the targets defined by feminists in the early 70s ('equal pay, sex discrimination and so on') have been achieved?

It was a bad beginning to a hopeless article, which ends in despair: 'With little chance of a socialist government, there can be little hope for women'. On the way she attacks the dispersal of feminists into 'community' politics, which she sees as confining women to the political hearth.

The word 'community' defies definition. As Chamberlain says, the concept has been used by the government to assert traditional values of gender (eg returning the elderly to the 'community'). Her article misunderstands the process of taking political power. Each of the babies she throws out with the 'community' bathwater — 'local crèches, Tenants Associations, Claimant groups' — are battlegrounds for control.

Collective childcare (local crèches) not only frees women who are mothers for other activities, but challenges traditional roles. The content of the childcare shapes our future, so local control is essential to fighting sexism and racism in the long term. Many women (and men) have been politicised by campaigns for more crèches, and empowered by running them.

Similarly, feminists in Tenants Associations and Claimants Unions have fought for a recognition of women's specific concerns. Each of these battles has won ground within the local state. Councils are not monoliths that have to be 'toppled' (to be replaced by what?) but battlegrounds for control. The last local elections saw a significant increase in women elected — largely due to active women's sections within the Labour Party. Women's Committees in some boroughs have taken up issues of health, violence against women, childcare, and provided information and meeting space for women. This has enabled many more women to take an active part in political life, and to make concrete gains in political power.

Trade union women reply

Margaret Prosser (TGWU), Pat Turner (GMBATU), Mel Read (ASTMS)

Sarah Benton is too generous when she describes middle-class delegates at the National Conference of Labour women as 'suspect allies' of trade union women (*NS* 23 May). There is little evidence that such women have any understanding of or sympathy with the aspirations of trade union women. The rejection of NUPE's carefully thought out motion is yet another example of this.

What was significant was not just the rejection, but the style of the rejection. In the worst tradition of the right-wing trade union men she is so quick to criticise, Ann Pettifor patronised the NUPE delegation, patted them on the head for trying very hard to get things right and almost having made it, but of course, not coming up to the exacting standards of WAC or the National Women's Committee. Such an attitude would have had some spurious legitimacy had either group come up with any alternative proposals about a way forward. There is no way that the majority of the trade unions can support the election of the women's seats on the NEC at the Women's Conference until the principle of a block or weighted vote for trade union women is acknowledged.

Sarah Benton is correct to point out that many trade unions do not give a high priority to the Labour Women's Conference, but fails to explain why. One reason is that the Conference is seen as irrelevant by trade union women, and the emphasis on constitutional and organisational change is a case in point. The shadow elections for the women's seats on the NEC were also seen as irrelevant by trade union women, who, with one or two exceptions, took no part in them. Contrary to Rachel Lever's letter, the unions did not vote for the shadow elections in 1985 and there would seem no logic in taking part in 1986.

A further reason is that trade union women have had other priorities over the last few years. Campaigns against privatisation, deregulation of industry, anti-union legislation, the abolition of Wages Councils, the Shops Bill, the abolition of protective legislation, Fowler's proposals on social security, for the defence of the NHS, for equal value legislation, contract compliance policies and for the retention of the political funds are a few examples. What encouragement do we have for taking these campaigns to the National Conference of Labour Women when the prevailing climate is overt hostility to trade unionism? The crux of the problem is not that of structure, but that the Labour Women's Conference has become a battleground for various factions who seek to control the Conference rather than advance the interests of women.

In our trade union work, trade union men and women strive to determine policy together, campaign and bargain together. We would be the last to deny that both men and women often fall short of this goal, but nevertheless we recognise that what Sarah Benton describes as 'cross-sex solidarity' is fundamental to trade unionism.

On a more constructive note, the fringe meeting for trade union delegates did produce some positive proposals, and hopefully trade union women will be suggesting ways in which the Women's Conference could be made more relevant to our needs. It was encouraging also that many constituency and women's section delegates were also looking for ways out of the sterile time-warp of the WAC's domination.

Bombing along

David Lowry, European Proliferation Information Centre

As a footnote to Jeremy Leggett's piece on the US and UK governments' disinterest in a nuclear test ban (*NS* 23 May), readers may like to know that on 24 April (Hansard, Col 229) this year the MoD admitted in Parliament that they are conducting no studies into the future redeployment of nuclear warhead design staff in preparation for the eventual conclusion of a Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty (CTBT). So either way, we go on testing, for the MoD doesn't care a damn about unemployment. Just like Lord Young.

Take me to your Leader
BY MOANIN' MINNIE - 38
THE EMINENT PERSONS' PEACE CONVOY HAS LANDED....
PEACE
SOUTH AFRICA ALREADY! DEAD QUICK, THOSE PLANES
RIGHT MEN, NOW INTO THE TRUCKS!
PEACE
LOVE
RENOUNCE VIOLENCE
PEACE WITH EMINENCE
PHUTTER PHUTTER
E.P.P.C. RULES OK
JOHN MINNION
THE SOUTH AFRICAN POLICE ARE MORE OR LESS AS I EXPECTED. BUT I THOUGHT THE WEATHER WOULD BE BETTER
POLICE
WELCOME TO DORSET

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MIRROR IMAGES

Shock Issue
IS THIS THE PROMISED LA
A BACKYARD SIX FEE
Millions of us are 'BETTER OFF'
Millions of us are 'STILL THE SAME'
Daily Mirror
Shock Issu
EUROPE'S BIGGEST DAILY SALE
DIVIDED BRITA
FREDDIE REED
DAILY Mirror
IT'S T
RICH WOT GE
THE PLEASU
IT WAS a good Budget—a good TORY Budget. A vigorous TORY Budget.
BARBER'S BU
at a glance...and what it means
●Another £1 for pensioners
●Jobs tax to be halved
●A new tax system by '73
MIRROR PAGE ONE COMMENT

Almost a quarter of a century ago, one young Australian made the long journey from the Earls Court Road to Fleet Street. In this extract from his latest book, Heroes*, *JOHN PILGER looks back on a golden age of British tabloid journalism*

'BRITISH PASSPORT holders straight ahead. Commonwealth to the left. Foreign passport holders wait here!'

Britain's first Commonwealth Immigration Act became law in July 1962, 'restricting the right of entry of persons into the United Kingdom'. After a decade of importing people to run underground trains, buses, maternity wards and other public services, the drawbridge was coming up and officialdom was on enthusiastic guard duty at Dover and the other gates of Britannia. As a citizen of the 'Old Commonwealth', the code for white, I was in under the wire.

The late autumn of 1962 was the harbinger of all the illusions of the 1960s and of the worst winter since the Middle Ages and the last great British smog before the Clean Air Act changed the November sky from black to grey. I was broke, and enticing the crackle of Radio Luxembourg above the musak of a busted cistern in an igloo in Earls Court was fun, but somehow failed to supply the liberating excitement of the soon-to-be-swinging imperial town. So I went to Fleet Street, to an organisation called British United Press, which reputedly hired transient colonials.

My job with BUP was to clip articles from British provincial newspapers, rewrite the first paragraphs and place the regurgitated versions in trays marked INDIA, THE MIDDLE EAST and beyond. Or I would clip pieces from English-language newspapers from India and the Middle East, rewrite the first paragraphs and place them in trays marked BRADFORD and LIVERPOOL. As this activity lacked the ingredients of the journalism I had in mind, I escaped to good grey Reuters; and after a probationary period, during which I was allotted the war in the Yemen and scolded for poor time-keeping, I was sent a kind letter offering me a career and a pension scheme. However, impatience and the wish to work on a newspaper had already led me to the offices of the *Daily Mirror*, then the largest circulating newspaper in the Western world, where I saw an assistant editor just

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back from lunch in Fleet Street. It was an opportune time.

The assistant editor was a Pickwickian eccentric called Michael Christiansen, a fine tabloid journalist and a kind man, who died as I set out to write this. As he entered his office he leapt at me, gripping an arm and bellowing, 'You're just what we want, an *Australian*!'

He explained that, although winter was almost upon us, there was still a final and crucial game of cricket to be played against the *Daily Express* the following Sunday . . . 'And what do *you* do best, Pilger?'

'I bowl,' I said, 'I spin bowl . . .'

'Splendid,' said the assistant editor. 'You start on the *Mirror* tomorrow.'

'What as?' I enquired.

'Oh, we'll work that out . . .'

He then led me to the news chief sub-editor, who had nothing available, and to the features chief sub-editor, who had nothing available but was a Yorkshireman and asked, 'What does he *do*?'

'He's a spin bowler,' said Christiansen.

'Smashing!' said the features chief sub-editor, whose name was Denis Futrell and who without delay appointed me assistant to the sub-editor in charge of television programmes, gardening, fishing and pets. My career in British journalism had begun. The next day I sent the following craven note to Christiansen: 'Sorry, I don't know a damn thing about cricket. Does this mean a record short innings on the *Mirror*?'

Christiansen bore this ill tiding with benevolence; indeed, benevolence was a quality which seemed to pervade the *Mirror*, although some have since called it complacence. The atmosphere on the paper was one for which nothing in my Australian newspaper experience had prepared me. There was a certain grace in the way the *Mirror* was run editorially: hierarchical, certainly, but with an informality and a confidence which arose from the fact that the *Mirror* endeavoured to reflect the lives and hopes of a large body of ordinary British people. As a consequence of this, not to mention the lack of competition, the paper was approaching sales of five million, or some 14 million readers every day.

The *Mirror* in the 1960s included some of the most enduring names in journalism: Cassandra (William Connor), Marjorie Proops, Donald Zec and Peter Wilson, 'The Man They Can't Gag', who relished mixing sport with politics and was among the first to explain to the British public the venality of apartheid's role in sport. The editorial director was Hugh Cudlipp, who at 24 had been the youngest editor of a national newspaper, the *Sunday Pictorial*. Cudlipp's personality and flair were evident everywhere in the *Mirror*. His understanding of the combined power of words and images — not to be confused with simply big headlines and pictures — was reflected in his classic front pages which, as he intended, helped the *Mirror* 'to create news about itself'.

Cudlipp invented the 'shock issue' in which most of the paper was devoted to one urgent social and political theme. In a shock issue to precede the 1964 election, which was to end 13 years of Conservative government, the *Mirror*'s front page was simple and eloquent. Beneath a banner headline which read, IS THIS THE PROMISED LAND? was a picture of a woman hanging out washing in her squalid back yard, six feet by nine feet.

Although it was a piece of blatant electioneering on behalf of the Labour Party, that issue of the *Mirror* revealed a truth which lay behind the facade of Britain during those years of never-having-it-so-good, of promise and illusion: a glimpse of the impending betrayal of those British people of patience, modesty and selflessness whose immediate families had suffered a great economic depression and had fought a long war, not only against Hitler but against their own past and for a better life. These were the *Mirror*'s readers, its 'natural constituency', for whom it pledged beneath its masthead, 'Forward with the people', and for whom it spoke on 11 May 1946, ten days after Hitler had died in his bunker: 'There are shining victories to be won in the cause of peace and social justice.'

WITH THE BLESSING of maverick millionaire publisher Cecil King, it was Hugh Cudlipp who determined where the *Mirror* stood. And where it stood was on the right wing of the Labour Party, whose social democratic faction then was dominant and unassailable and an important prop to what used to be known, prior to Margaret Thatcher's time, as 'the consensus'. This nod-and-wink arrangement between Conservative and Labour governments and the 5 per cent of the population who owned more than 40 per cent of the nation's personal wealth existed so that life in Britain might never *appear* divisive or influenced by the extremes of wealth and poverty.

This largely unspoken, ill-defined, squirearchical and, of course, very British arrangement followed the Second World War. For the ruling class, 'consensus' meant social tinkering which it could tolerate and which would reinforce its power. The fruits of this connivance were made clear when the Attlee government and successive Labour administrations, especially that of Harold Wilson, willingly mortgaged their policies to Tory assent. Indeed for politicians, 'consensus' meant something distinctly cosy, as the Labour MP turned media man, Brian Walden, later described it. Walden wrote:

> The two front benches [in Parliament] liked each other and disliked their back benches. We were children of the famous consensus . . . we were spoiled, of course, because the electorate, which was even more irresponsible than we were, could be relied upon to grow bored or disenchanted and turn the opposition into the government. It made little difference, for we believed much the same things.

For working people, the 'consensus did not have quite the same cosiness, but it did mean that, in exchange for their acceptance of low wages and the acquiescence of their trade union leaders, they were granted reasonably priced housing, clothing and food, as well as basic services such as nationalised health care and the hope of a 'new start' for at least one child.

Hope was the most important ingredient of the 'consensus' arrangement, for without it working people might not work as they had worked for almost a century. One of the profound effects of the Second World War was that the pliancy of ordinary people was no longer assured, and without a modicum of hope people might strike and 'disturb the industrial peace' or, worse, disrupt society.

By the time the 1960s arrived, this hope, as exemplified by 'The Promised Land' in the *Mirror* headline, had converted to specific expectations. These were centred upon the creation of a new consumer world for the young in the off-the-shelf, off-the-peg dreams. 'TEENAGERS HAVE FUN ON £1000 MILLION A YEAR!' read a 1962 headline in the *Daily Herald*. Youth was the target; and selling things, lots of things, almost anything, to the previously poor was what Swinging Britain was about. The hope on which the 'consensus' turned, and by which the old assumptions of the 'antique unwritten charter' of power could be preserved, was escape from the drudgery and greyness and imprisonment of class. It was this which was held out so tantalisingly to the young, as long as they spent and spent; and it was this which, in little more than a decade, would be the source of so much 'disruption', when the betrayal implicit in the 'consensus' would be made clear. With hindsight, the quality of the *Daily Mirror* lay in its capacity to warn its readers that the bargain was one-sided, that they were being conned.

I APPLIED to leave 'TV programmes, gardening, fishing and pets' and to be restored to full life as a reporter. Michael Christiansen agreed, and I was sent north for two years, during which time I stayed 'on the road', from Manchester to Tyneside, to the Border, across the Pennines, to the Mersey. It was an assignment which some of my colleagues in London saw as the equal of banishment to Pitcairn Island.

Certainly, during the first drive north, when I stopped for petrol, I failed to understand what the man said, and the farther north I went the more incomprehensible were the voices; but what

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the people *were* seemed perfectly clear. They were another nation with a different history, different loyalties, different humour, even different values. 'We're the rich who can't get to their money,' someone in Lancashire said to me. In later years I would report from some of the most inaccessible places on the planet, but few of my dispatches would present a more alien picture in the South of England than those sent from the secret society 'north of Watford'.

This was a time when working people were said to be 'speaking out' and even 'taking over'. For example, people whose accents had denied them access to sections of the entertainments industry were now apparently in demand. There had been *Room at the Top* and *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning* and similar films which were said to reflect a new classlessness; but none of them showed people of different classes as equals, at ease with each other or in each other's homes. The principal celluloid 'Working-class hero', Albert Finney, came from a lower-middle-class background (like Harold Wilson, who tried hard to cover his tracks with stories about childhood clogs and a devotion to HP Sauce) and only one major working-class actor, Tom Courtenay, broke through. All of them — the Beatles and the many clever cockneys enriched and fêted by the media and the 'old' aristocracy — were absorbed by a fundamentally unchanged class-based society, thus making Britain *seem* more expressive and open and, above all, reinforcing the position of those in charge.

Classlessness was presented as a parade of caricatures: *Coronation Street*, Alf Garnett, even the splendid *Steptoe and Son*. Behind this facade people who came to London from the provinces worked hard enough to change their accents and obscure their origins and to learn the mannerisms and codes of the middle class. *This* was the momentous change; and these people, who formed new suburbs on new private estates in the South-East, became a 'comfortable class' and a constituency for a new kind of Toryism. When I first met some of these people I was puzzled why they should speak with a certain mockery, tinged with contempt, for those from whom they themselves had come.

During the 1960s the wisdom of the 'consensus' was that everything north of Watford was changing for the best; the North at least was 'modernising'. That this modernising was often merely a process of bringing poverty up to date, of violently distorting and turning back people's lives in the cause of a cult of town planning and of political expediency, was not considered a matter for serious public debate. These were swinging times; progress was progress; the North was a 'land of hope and agony': the agony being a necessary appendage of change, the hope predominant. Those were the words in a headline above an article in the *Daily Mirror* on 16 January 1968, which read:

> Instead of the countless Victorian piles . . . that sat for ages like grim stone Buddhas, great towers now rise and are joined to sprawling limbs of new homes that face, not blades of soot, but trees and green. And those fields of rubble seem only in transit; soon people will be living there, with their shopping precincts and post offices and pubs. So have people's faces changed. They are younger now and they wear none of the despair that the North's myths say they should.

Such words embodied the false optimism of the time, denying community traditions in the face of fraudulent 'progress'. They were words which helped to erect the facade beyond which town planners and Labour politicians and journalists did not look, or did not wish to look. The central myth was there; it was youth taking over a new, classless Britain, regardless of huge profit-making from jerry-built human pigeon lofts which, far from retaining 'something of the neighbourly warmth' of people's homes, disfigured much of the landscape and life of Britain. Alas, I wrote the article.

In 1967 Cudlipp decided that a 'Boom Cities *Mirror*' would be produced in the regional centres of England — Liverpool, Newcastle, Birmingham, Bristol, Manchester, Southampton — and on the evening of publication a spectacular banquet would be held, attended by a cabinet minister at least, various captains of industry, local politicians and others down the established scale.

In Liverpool, the banquet was held on a ship fully dressed for the occasion, complete with Harold Wilson and a real Liver bird. In Newcastle, guests were startled to find a 'tableau' of real steel-plate riveters in their midst. In Birmingham, a motorcycle burst through a screen; and in Bristol, home of the British aircraft industry, the progress of Concorde was discussed over an open line with the co-manufacturers in Toulouse.

All four represented grand illusions. In 1967 Liverpool, docks were falling silent as never before. In Newcastle, shipyard orders were being lost to the Japanese. In Birmingham, the motorcycle industry was in its death throes; and in Bristol, the Concorde was then a magnificent symbol of the British aircraft industry's failure as an international, competitive business.

In all four industries the problems were manifest and similar. The managements were inept, authoritarian and cosseted by a class-founded education system, which looked down its nose on industry, and by pre-war tariff barriers which were the residue of empire. The unions were fragmented and weakened by their own craft and class divisions. That management and workers knew almost nothing about each other and shared so little human contact was the canker in British industrial life, the antithesis of 'boom'.

DURING my two years' travelling 'north of Watford', and on many subsequent trips north, listening to people taught me much and unearthed a bounty of stories of working lives. To be among English people not cultivated to measure their every emotion, indeed who were proud of their ability to express feelings, was a constant pleasure. Almost everybody I met either had a son or aunt 'down there', in Australia, or they once had considered emigrating themselves and had 'sent off for the papers'.

In South Yorkshire, strewn with hell's kitchens, were miners descended from the Irish of the Potato Famine who had family in New South Wales; whole collieries had shipped out to the pit towns of the Hunter Valley. These people knew about such places a world away, yet many had never met a southerner in their own land.

I would find a street, virtually any street, and knock on doors; and what intrigued me then and intrigues me still was that such human warmth, tolerance and forbearance could survive the treadmill of British cities and the hypnotic routine of working lives. For example, Clara Street in 1970 was typical of much of Newcastle upon Tyne. My first view of Clara Street was on a Monday, with the working week ahead. It was half-past two in the afternoon, two hours before the sun was meant to go, and smoke from the six great chimneys of Dunstan Power Station had already seized the November mist and congealed into night. And this 'night' then moved up the hill and settled, like fine silt, in lace curtains and mortar and larders and in the lungs of those who, some hours later, passed as silhouettes along the ribbon of black barracks into doorways of home.

In the very early morning, after a brief interval of telly, food and sleep, the silhouettes moved down the hill, the day's first Woodbines lit up, the first wheezing under way: down into the buses filled with men and women whose skin was ash-grey, and on towards the great chimneys and the brickworks and the steelworks, past the Hydraulic Crane public house and the Forge Hammer and the Moulders Arms, and the Apprentices Welfare Club of 1863, down Gluehouse Lane and Pipe Track Lane. All of that for £16 a week for the men, and less for the women.

At 96 Clara Street lived Bill and Sylvia Clayton and their two children. Bill said, 'I'm not political, but I know talk of "paying our way", words the politicians use, is not what's wrong. What's really wrong is the one thing nobody in this country wants to talk about any more. It's people in government not caring how we live, what time we go to work, how long we've got to work just to put shoes on the bairns. We might as well be in Turkey or like that. We're sure as not part of *their* country.' □

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Jackie Morris

A star to steer her by

Barbara Burford

Why do Black women writers in Britain have a lower and far less glamorous profile than their sisters have recently acquired in the States?

THE TITLE of this piece has, of course, been removed from its original context: a fairly innocent example, I could argue, of manipulating a writer's words to suit one's own ends; in this case, to convey not only my subject but a certain amount of literary chic.

However — particularly since Alice Walker's stunning novel, *The Colour Purple*, won the Pulitzer Prize — Black women's writing has been used by so many to convey radical chic that our words, often written directly out of pain and disillusionment, are in great danger of being taken *totally* out of context.

I must admit that at first I was elated when Walker's winning of the prize was announced; not because she needed any validation to make her one of the landmark writers of this century, but because of all those whose desire for street cred would ensure that they had to read it. This I saw as the first genuinely subversive act of the Pulitzer Prize award committee; for the book is a cultural time bomb, set to explode in our hearts and our minds.

But there is another side to this: the creation of an almost Hollywood-style star system of Black American women writers. Faced with a huge, hitherto untapped market of readers — Black Americans — plus the new, suddenly highly regarded feminist readership, publishers could make money out of these writers. But they had to control the supply of the product — 'you mustn't flood the market'. They had to make sure that their prospective readers knew that what they were buying was the one and only true and authentic Black Woman's Voice. Accept no imitations!

Now we as a people are adept and enormously creative, always seeking and finding ways to turn an oppressive disadvantage to our own use. So many of us argued that, if this obvious exploitation meant that in the future our children could go into a library or a bookshop and find not just one book but many by Black women, did it really matter how they got there? No, perhaps not — *if* they stayed in print past the current vogue and *if* our distinctive voices were not distorted to suit white 'literary' expectations.

In Britain, the compromise is not so simple. Many of us obviously share a commonality with the Black American experience, but many do not. And, for us, there is still a dearth of books by Black British women recalling, reclaiming, our history and our experiences. Black women and Women of Colour in Britain have such gloriously differing life experiences that it is a matter of grave urgency that all these voices, in their rainbow array, be heard.

The temptation for British publishers, of course, is that the American 'product' is already market tested before it arrives here. Thus it is so much simpler, and more profitable, to give your publishing house the right amount of ethno-cred gloss by publishing the American stars. The growing Black readership not being taken into account, the main market here is seen as the white liberal one — and both the readers and the publishers can read the American books and shake their heads and say: 'But, of course, it's different here.'

It is. But not in the way that they mean. How will we know what the differences are? How would those same readers like their history and their creativity to be judged in the future by the books of white American writers?

Books about the American Black experience have another unfortunate effect: Black people in them are placed in another country. If we do not have books by Black British writers, showing and discussing the role of Black people in Britain's past, present and future, we will continue to be seen, however subconsciously, as temporary and marginal.

Oh, there are gestures, and the competition for a handful of 'approved' Black British women writers for inclusion in every anthology with any pretensions to right-on-ness is fierce. Likewise the competition for 'firsts'. But we don't come trailing clouds of American media hype, or promising mega sales. We have our own voices, and our own concerns, and we have lived too long with a media that gets more overtly racist and sexist with each day to trust our creativity to media hype and the unsisterly competitiveness of the star system.

To name herself a writer, and to give priority to time spent writing, is difficult for any woman, doubly so for a Black woman in Britain. To write our anger, rage, pain and disillusionment is often to dip our pens in our own life blood. To get past this, to expose the precious core of joy and stillness within us — gained sometimes almost at the expense of our sanity — to the marketplace, takes a singular amount of courage. Only the need and encouragement of our sisters, mothers, daughters has enabled some of us to face publication and its attendant media-borne ills.

Black women writers in Britain are not in the business of confirming or creating stereotypes for a largely white readership. We are writing to tell our own particular histories; to speak our mothers' silences; to share amongst our isolated sisters our experiences and our joys.

Black women writing in Britain at this moment share a commitment and a need to leave a legacy, an investment, for all those young Black people whose only experience is life in Britain. To do this, we need a drift of many-hued poppies in the pale wheatfield of British publishing, not the occasional specimen flower, spaced strategically here and there. And certainly not the star system, to further isolate us, not only from our Black readers but from each other, a vital and important source of strength and support. □

Barbara Burford's collection of stories The Threshing Floor *is published by Sheba this month.*

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Both sides now

Colin Shindler

The Siege: The Saga of Israel and Zionism
CONOR CRUISE O'BRIEN *Weidenfeld* £20

CONOR CRUISE O'BRIEN's interest in the Middle East began when, as an Irish UN representative, he found himself sandwiched between the Iraqui and the Israeli delegates. After his first sanitised contribution on the subject — 'something in it for both sides' — he was thanked by his colleagues to the alphabetical right and left. 'Christ — was it as bad as that?' commented a journalist friend when he told her.

It is the realisation of the virtual irreconcilability of Israeli and Arab/Palestinian positions which characterises this 800-page history. No congratulations this time, but still something in it for both sides. *The Siege* is not yet another cliché-laden account of Israel from its Herzlian inception, but the story of the play of forces around the Jews.

Zionism arose because of the inability of non-Jews to assure and assert the security of the Jews over two millenia. In different epochs and different places, Jews were stigmatised for being god-killers, financial leeches or simply non-conformist strangers. In Arab countries, Jews persevered under *dhimmi* status as protected subjects of the Sultan at a privileged level of discrimination in comparison with Christian Europe. O'Brien's stated brief does not mention ideology, yet it provides the background noise. Even so, there is no mention of Marxism-Zionism or its founder, Dov Ber Borochov.

O'Brien pinpoints the arrival of Palestinian nationalism in an anonymous proclamation circulated in Jerusalem in 1914. Like Jewish nationalism — born in the same period — it came into existence at an unfashionable time. The most publicised advocate of Palestinian nationalism was the Grand Mufti of Jerusalem, Haj Amin al-Husseini, who spent the war years in Berlin and, like the Afrikaners, hoped that a Nazi victory would eliminate British influence. O'Brien believes that the Arab-Jewish riots were instigated from above, most notably by al-Husseini and British officers. He cites the fact that during the mid-1920s, when there was high Jewish immigration, there was virtually no violence.

The Holocaust initiated a certain sympathy for the Jews but the stereotype still remained. O'Brien recalls a lunch with a delegate of the Vatican at a refugee conference just a few months after the war. The Monsignor did not mince his words — 'I'm not antisemitic, I just hate them.' The Jews had done very well out of the war on the black market, he observed.

As an Irishman, O'Brien can relate to the problem of minority peoples who have been relegated to the sidelines of history, but he takes to task Ken Livingstone who in his user-friendly mode a few years ago compared the sufferings of the Irish people over 800 years to the fate of European Jewry during the Holocaust.

The second half of the book describes how a moderate Israeli foreign policy as expounded by Abba Eban was neutralised and isolated by Israel's Labour's hawks. The deep bombing raids into Egypt, the inflation of settlements in non-populated areas of the West Bank and the deafening silence which greeted Sadat's first peace overtures exemplify the malaise which permeated Israel Government policy between 1967 and 1973. The rude awakening of the Yom Kippur war brought some back to their senses, but certainly not all. O'Brien interestingly implies that Henry Kissinger and the CIA obliquely encouraged Sadat to launch his attack.

O'Brien's treatment of the last decade is couched in realistic terms, but often gives way to polarised opinions. He tends to underplay the role of the peace camp in Israel. While many Sephardim took their revenge on condescending Labour attitudes by voting for Begin in 1977, the real reason for his victory was a large Labour defection to the Democratic Movement for Change, established as a reaction to Labour's illiberal policies and general corruption. The protest against the Phalangist massacre of Palestinians at Sabra and Chatilla was not 'led by the Labour alignment'; it was Peace Now who planned and organised it and many hitherto silent Labour luminaries had to be pushed to the platform. Neither is the divide between Ashkenazim and Sephardim so clear cut as indicated.

The epilogue is entitled 'Territory for Peace?' O'Brien believes that agreements are possible on Gaza and the Golan, but not, despite his own liberal views, on the West Bank.

He argues that a projected coalition of Labour and dovish parties on the Left could not give up Jerusalem and the vehement reaction from the nationalist Right and the messianic religious would carry with it the whiff of civil war. Moreover, Hussein and Arafat are unlikely to go it alone. A Palestinian state on the West Bank, he suggests, would be unstable and collapse, especially under the political pressure and violent actions of Palestinian rejectionists.

Such a thesis implies that the West Bank problem will not be solved in the short term. Does this mean that all attempts at dialogue are fruitless? O'Brien selects statistics to bolster his thesis, yet some 27 per cent of Israelis in an opinion poll last year regarded the PLO as their negotiating partner. Many Israelis believe that the doors must still remain open while the psychological movement to mutual recognition and subsequent negotiations take place on both sides.

That process has developed at a quicker pace in Israel. The PLO does not unambiguously recognise that the Jewish people have a right to self-determination and still clings to the fantasy of an annexation of Israel within a Greater Palestine. PLO officials such as Said Hammami and Issam Sartawi who espoused a rational position were gunned down by rejectionist gunmen.

If Gaddafy and Assad cut their ties with the rejectionists, it may permit the mainstream Palestine National movement to pursue realistic policies. If the PLO does have a moderate wing, then the irony of Reagan's Tripoli raid is that it may allow Arafat a measure of flexibility. Even so, Conor Cruise O'Brien's book injects a dose of hard realism into an area dominated by public relations and propaganda pundits. □

FICTION

Russian salad

Boyd Tonkin

Sphinx
D. M. THOMAS *Gollancz* £9.95

A SEQUEL to *Ararat* and *Swallow*, the third part of D. M. Thomas's planned quartet of Russian novels begins with an unlikely fantasy. In a Soviet mental hospital a tortured dissident claims to the guard that he works for the *New Statesman*. The orderly has other ideas and a cosh to support them: 'You're Kravchenko, a fucking terrorist, and a raving loonie. Learn some fucking respect.'

Ever since *The White Hotel*, Thomas has given his public Kravchenko's strange delusion in reverse: he thrills a safe Western intelligentsia with visions of persecution and massacre. What *Sphinx* in a defensive moment of self-description calls 'The author's lurid style/And themes of holocaust and lust' seem to cater to the liberal's 'hunger for absolutes'. To a doubtful culture he spins a dream of deep Slavic certainties: oppression and dissent, art and faith. Against the ambiguities of the sceptic West, Russia stand as the real thing, its Gulags crowded with a better class of poet.

At the same time, Thomas stuns his audience with a barrage of narrative twists and feints designed to teach some respect for the novelist as liar, trickster, thief and sphinx. Follow him here and you end up back in the country of the mind he calls, with a taste for stale metonymy, 'Hampstead'. In this land of interpretation there are no great truths; only versions, readings and second opinions.

As they would say in 'Hampstead', *Sphinx* puts its readers in a double-bind. Littered with people and events from the year 1982, it seems to offer a well-documented story of a gormless Welsh *Guardian* journalist in search of enlightenment among the dissidents of Leningrad.

Its geo-political nuts and bolts lock into place. Andropov takes over, Thatcher recaptures the Falklands, flight KAL 007

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plunges into the Pacific. Through a dark and jaded city Lloyd George, the reporter, trails Nadia, sphinx-like in her secrets. Is she a Christian feminist actress or yet another 'swallow', planted by the KGB to trap Western visitors? And so on . . .

But, as this tangle of mutual suspicion and desire unwinds, Thomas sends out a different set of signals. These undercut the plot's claims to weight and depth with a series of spoofs, jokes, shifts of gear and rib-nudging allusions. Russia becomes 'Russia', a literary fabrication ruled by paper tigers and subverted by printer's devils. You might find Thomas's Nevsky Prospekt in a bookshop, but never on a map.

Sphinx starts with a play, *Isadora's Scarf*, which features the feckless poet Rozanov — a survivor from *Ararat* and *Swallow* — in a soapy tale of murder, adultery and Stalinist skulduggery. It finishes with a narrative poem in which the poet Pushkin dies in a duel while (in another century) Nadia gets dispatched to Rome to seduce the Pope. (She succeeds, but Wojtyla's own Jesuit spooks are 'older than the KGB' and rumble her first.)

In the novel's central prose section, Thomas once more uses his conceit of an international circuit of improvised poetry competitions dominated by the Soviets and run like gymnastics or ice-dancing. Eventually, each strand of the action fits into someone's yarn. Wait long enough and all *Sphinx*'s characters find themselves pinioned by quotation-marks and slotted into the next level of the fictional *matrushka*.

This is Thomas's Slavophilia at work, rather than a further bout of post-modernism. Mixed-media effects, the nesting of stories one inside another, the blend of fable and journalism, epic and farce: it all leads back to his beloved Pushkin. Once a guardian angel, Pushkin has become a kind of *dybbuk* for Thomas, an obsessive demon who crouches over the typewriter and forces him time and again through the same repertoire.

As sphinxes should, the novel works well enough as a mystery and a poser of discomfiting questions. But Thomas often tries to scale a peak of myth and merely arrives at a platitude. *Sphinx* tests to destruction its stock of sloe-eyed, sad-hearted Slavic clichés: 'I flowed into her. It was like the ebb and flow of the Neva.' This naivety may be feigned, but it grows just as wearing as the genuine article.

His debt to the loose, digressive forms of Russian story-telling has saddled Thomas with another quality of traditional narrative: its tendency to clip fixed types and phrases together into a landscape of received ideas. Innocent reporters, seductive spies, boozy poets: so much invention, so few surprises. Not Leningrad, but Legoland.

Like one of his performers, Thomas can be a subtle architect but a slapdash performer. Thick with hints about the relation of knowledge to desire, and of freedom to fiction, *Sphinx* seldom finds the pressure of language or density of character to match its grand design. In the end it reminds you of a dazzling rock video whose director wraps state-of-the-art production cosmetically around brittle lyrics and lumpish acting. Loved the concept. Shame about the song. □

Not forgotten

David Norris

Magnus Hirschfeld: A Portrait of a Pioneer in Sexology
CHARLOTTE WOLFF *Quartet* £25

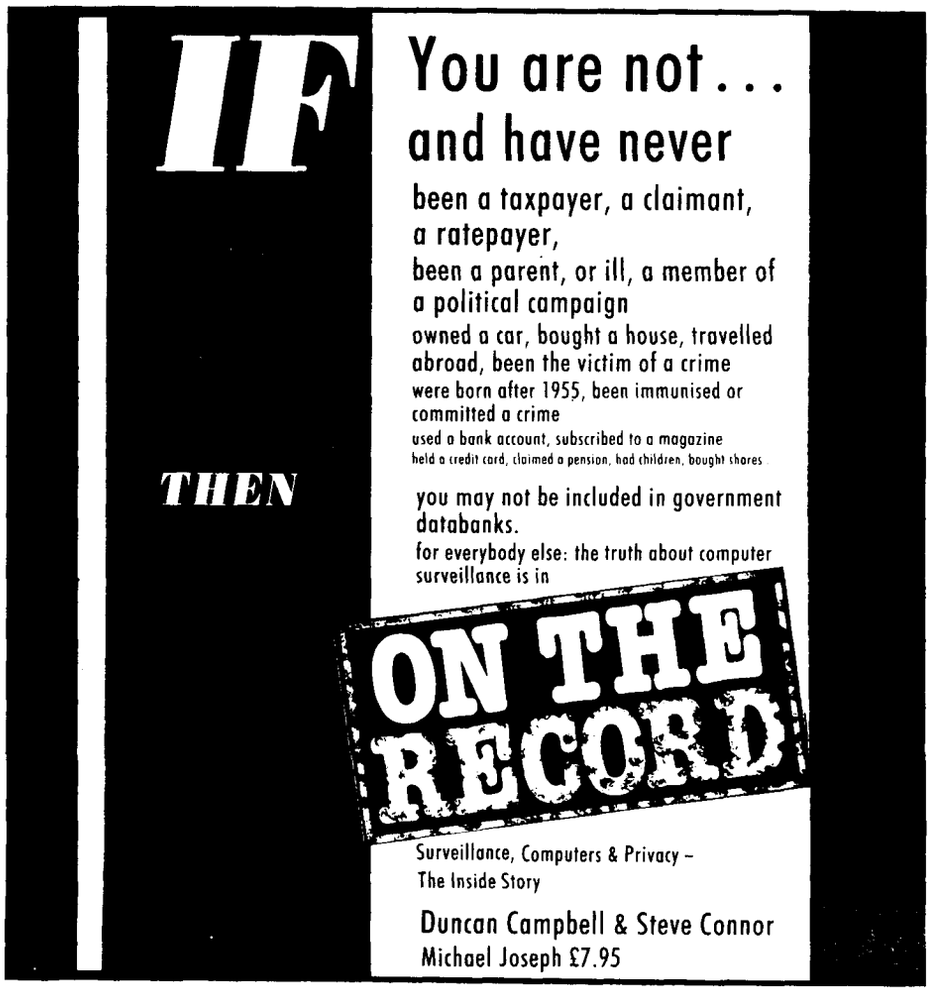
YUDKA, THE CENTRAL character of the Israeli writer Haim Hazaz' story 'The Sermon', announces to his startled audience of fellow Jews that he is opposed to the whole notion of Jewish history: 'Because we didn't make our own history, the Goyim made it for us.' This seems an appropriate point of entry for a consideration of the life of Magnus Hirschfeld, because, as both a Jew and a homosexual, he was subject to attempts to obliterate his memory from the record of European history.

These efforts were so nearly successful that it was with a combination of surprise, indignation and interest that I myself began to piece together fragmentary references to Hirschfeld in books of memoirs, works on sexology and booklets such as John Lauritsens's 'The Early Homosexual Rights Movement' in the early 1970s. Few people then realised — and not many are aware today — that Hirschfeld was both a contemporary of and a comparable figure to men such as Freud and Havelock Ellis.

I was so moved by what I could gather of the story of Hirschfeld's idealistic and unremitting struggle for gay rights in very adverse conditions that, in 1977, I launched the Hirschfeld Foundation to raise funds for Homosexual Law Reform in Ireland and, in 1979, opened the Hirschfeld Centre in Dublin: a gay community centre comprising a discotheque, library, coffee shop, counselling service, political action groups, etc. Our intention in employing Hirschfeld's name was to help to retrieve him from obscurity.

Hirschfeld was born in Kolberg, Germany, in 1868, the son of a Jewish doctor. Deciding to follow in his father's footsteps, he specialised in nervous disorders. In 1897 he founded the Scientific Humanitarian Committee. This was the first organisation ever formed to have as its specific aim the achievement of homosexual law reform by promoting open and informed debate on the subject. Its motto was '*Per Scientia ad Justitiam*' (justice through understanding). The Committee was responsible for a yearbook, published from 1899 to 1923, in which the latest scientific discoveries and theories concerning the nature of human sexuality were discussed.

A landmark year in Hirschfeld's struggle, 1903, saw the launching of a petition to have paragraph 175 of the German criminal code (the equivalent of the acts still operative in Ireland) abolished. He succeeded in obtaining a large number of distinguished signatories including Herman Hesse, Krafft-Ebing, Einstein, Martin Buber, Thomas Mann, Carl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Maria von Weber, Gerhart Hauptmann and Rainer Maria Rilke. When news of the petition became public, leading writers, intellectuals and artists such as Zola, Tolstoy and George Brandes came forward to volunteer their support. In the same year Hirschfeld initiated the first detailed sociological survey of sexual orientation and adaptation in the human male by circulating a questionnaire among 3,000 students at Charlottenberg and 5,721 metal workers.

His calm, unhysterical and humane approach and the dignity with which he defended himself against a private summons for disseminating obscene materials were instrumental in winning futher support for the movement. In 1913, Hirschfeld addressed the International Medical Congress in a London still reeling from the after-effects of the Wilde trials and, in the same year, founded (with Drs Iwan Bloch and Heinrich Koerber) the Medical Society for Sexual Science. Other bodies were called into being in rapid succession: the Magnus Hirschfeld Foundation for Sex Research (1918), the Institute for Sexual Science (1919) and the World League for Sexual Reform (1921).

The rise of totalitarianism, however, both of the Left and the Right, had a stultifying effect on moves for social reform. Hirschfeld himself as both a Jew and a reformer had to flee Germany, first to Switzerland and then to France, where he died in 1935. On 6 May 1933 students of the Berlin Gymnasium, led by Nazi storm troopers, marched on the Hirschfeld Institute. Over 10,000 items of irreplaceable scientific interest, books, records, case histories were removed and later publicly burned in the Opera Square to indicate that the Nazi era of what Heinrich Himmler termed 'Sexual Hygiene' had begun.

Many brave people, including Kurt Hiller, the Secretary of the Scientific Humanitarian Committee, were dragged off to the concentration camps, beginning the most thorough modern continuance of the methods and aims of the Inquisition: the final solution to the homosexual problem. Up to 500,000 homosexuals were swallowed up in Auschwitz, Dachau, Sachsenhausen, Belsen . . . The international community raised no protest. Such silences (there have been many) make it difficult to understand or excuse Charlotte Wolff for the following statement in her 'portrait' of Magnus Hirschfeld: 'I have never agreed with the assumption that homosexuals have no history, and Hirschfeld confirmed my view.'

One of the fascinating things that does emerge from Wolff's book is the high esteem and prestige enjoyed by Hirschfeld both nationally and internationally for the first 30 years of this century. Nevertheless, his work was ultimately to prove vulnerable to the forces of fascism: a lesson for us all today, in the age of Aids Hysteria and the moral majority, an age darkened and dominated by Messrs Reagan, Khomeini and Wojtyla. No gain for the gay community will ever be satisfactorily consolidated until the source of popular anti-gay prejudice within the framework of Judaeo-Christian thought is isolated and neutralised.

Hirschfeld's most lasting achievement will probably be in the sociopolitical, rather than the strictly scientific, field. He gave dignity and public recognition for the first time to a grievously oppressed group and formulated clearly the demand for civil rights for homosexually oriented people. Moreover in his Reichstag petition he isolated the paradox of the 'victimless crime' and established criteria for legislation governing homosexual behaviour which still provide valuable guidelines for reform: 'Homosexual actions should be treated in the same way as those between people of the opposite sex and punishable only

(a) when force by one partner is exercised against the other

(b) when either person is under 16

(c) when these activities offend public decency.'

Dr Wolff is certainly to be congratulated on her choice of subject. Unfortunately, this congratulation cannot be wholeheartedly extended to the execution of the project. The style employed is that of a lecture to the 6th form with continuous authorial intrusions at the expense of the subject. The book is peppered with phrases such as 'which particularly appealed to me', 'which fall in with my own view', 'I have no doubt', 'I totally reject', 'I was personally much impressed', etc.

We are, it is true, given fair warning of this in the slightly absurd preface, where the author, perversely for someone embarking on a biography, asserts the impossibility of really knowing anything substantial about anyone. 'Our knowledge about a person is therefore nothing else but a subjective interpretation. A photographic account of the minutest data of an individual's life and work could never project an image of his personality. A portrait might with luck be able to do this.' Well, you just weren't lucky lady and I, for one, await the arrival of the photographer. □

Peter

John Gurney

Peter knows how difficult it is
to love a half-crazed neighbour. When she rings,
complaining down the telephone of his
disordered house, the misery it brings,
his stomach knots with wrath. It's then he finds
compassion is a sham. She's paranoid.
Believes the world's against her. Has declined
remarkably of late, and grows annoyed
at all external sounds. Though still a prig,
she punctures rubber balls that cross her walls
with glowing red-hot pokers. 'DON'T SHOUT PIGS!'
is scrawled across her panes. But worst of all's
that telephone. Again she's on the line.
She kills men with her high-pitched nasal whine.

CRIME

Body politic

Nick Kimberley

SHOULD WE ADMIRE a thriller which, on its very first page, introduces us to the complex political analysis of Nicos Poulantzas (quickly followed by namechecks for Lacan, Althusser, Macherey), or should we laugh at it? Is a scene in a strip joint any less gratuitous in a radical feminist thriller than in the average butch private-eye novel, even though the point is to jeer at male lechery rather than leer at the stripper? The questions are raised by, respectively, John Shannon's **Broken Codes** (Pluto, £8.95 & £2.50) and Mary Wings's **She Came Too Late** (Women's Press, £8.95 & £3.95), two recent thrillers with politics in the foreground.

Not that the political has ever been absent from the thriller; Buchan's patriotism, Chandler's network of corruption, Le Carré's probing of the meeting between ossified duty and personal integrity: these are the genre's cornerstones. Writers attempting politically sound thrillers run the risk of tripping over their ideological bootlaces. For the most part, Shannon and Wings construct plots sturdy enough to support any didactic purposes. Once Shannon has regurgitated Poulantzas on page one, he never reappears.

Shannon is an American who has spent some years living here and is eager to display a knowledge of London which seems faultless but too detailed for a plot which already has all the twists and turns required by the modern spy novel. Rival factions in the US secret services are battling it out and, with authentic American pragmatism, choose London as their battleground. A burnt-out spy is bullied back into action which threatens his marriage, and the lives of him and his wife. There is subtlety here, in the struggle of two people first to love each other then to survive the battering which follows their attempt to lead decent lives. If *Broken Codes* lacks Le Carré's depth, it makes a similar point: that love, honour and decency are not easily achieved in the face of treachery from those with too much power. Not a new observation, but well made.

Mary Wings tries harder to upset thriller conventions. Her seeker after truth is not the usual rampant heterosexual man, but a

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politically committed lesbian — not that the genre can be recast by a change of personnel, a shift of location. Perhaps that's the point of genre, that it bends to accommodate every narrative trope. Wings has written a brisk, cynical thriller which, like Shannon's, pits individual integrity against an inflexibly corrupt system. She too packs in excessive detail: the strip joint scene already mentioned makes the correct points about male sexuality but achieves nothing for the plot. That said, *She Came Too Late* offers no simple formula of good and bad. It's a portrait of tough American radicalism making its presence felt. The central character, Emma Victor, will, we are informed, appear again. Not too often, I hope: all series characters quickly run out of steam.

The population of the American thriller is shifting. At one time it occupied one or another megalopolitan sprawl (Los Angeles, New York). Then some moved out to smaller cities — San Francisco or Indianapolis. Now characters occupy smaller towns still, like Saratoga (the American Newmarket) in Stephen Dobyns's **Saratoga Headhunter** (Allison & Busby, £8.95 & £2.95) or the idly luxurious Laguna beach in T. Jefferson Parker's **Laguna Heat** (Bodley Head, £9.95).

The thriller writer and Eng. Lit. academic Max Byrd has observed that, at its best, American detective fiction can develop genuinely regional forms, making the landscape's immense variety an integral part of the novel. It's a valid claim, but a thriller must offer more than scenery if it is to hold our attention. Neither *Saratoga Headhunter* nor *Laguna Beach* are wholly successful, although the former's central character, Charlie Bradshaw, has an engagingly down-home supplement to his detective work: he delivers milk. But Dobyns's plot is too diffuse, his insistent parade of colourful eccentrics difficult to swallow.

There's a pointed contrast between the central cop figures in *Laguna Heat* and K C Constantine's **Always a Body to Trade** (Allison & Busby, £2.95): the first offers a vulnerable divorcé driven, by guilt and media pressure, out of the LA police after killing a kid in the line of duty. He ends up in quieter Laguna Beach where, an upstanding young man, he penetrates two gruesome murders thanks to his moral conviction. Constantine, on the other hand, gives us Mario Balzic, a police chief who is more ambivalent: he simply wants to keep his town in one piece. If a few laws have to be bent, he can live with that. That hint of duplicity, echoed in the abrasive dialogue, has a more truly modern resonance than Jefferson Parker's righteous decorum with its reminder of the certainties of earlier California crime novelists.

After all this Americana, the cisatlantic tones of Leo Clancy's **Crack** (Secker, £9.95) have extra freshness. Clancy is less concerned with his story — coppers take it out on a group of not so innocent Irishmen, who plot revenge — than with the fecund ramblings of his people's speech as they talk to each other in the pub, at the dog track, in the bathroom. What could have been a conventional short story becomes a scintillating shaggy dog story: most of the considerable pleasure is not in the plot, but in the telling. □

Footnotes

DESPITE the evidence, it must be summer: **Feminist Book Fortnight**'s back. For all that it's only three years old—if you count its inception in 1984 as 'the First International Feminist Book Fair'—this celebratory and promotional event has acquired an impressive momentum: 17,500 catalogues last year; 30,000 this year plus an extra 15,000 printed, when stocks proved inadequate, at W.H. Smith's own expense.

But, as successful institutions will, Feminist Book Fortnight's also acquired a whisper or two of controversy. There are voices in feminist publishing expressing disquiet at its evolution.

It might be useful to explain the structure. Although the Fortnight spins off into readings, signing sessions, workshops and discussions, its centre consists of a nationwide bookshop promotion, a catalogue of over 300 recommended fiction and non-fiction titles by women and, selected from the latter by a panel, a short list of titles for 'special attention' by bookshops, punters and the press.

Controversy no.1 has been caused by the catalogue, which, some feel, is more about commerce than feminism. Any publisher can pay to have listed what it chooses to describe as its 'feminist' titles and, though copies of entries are inspected for obvious unsuitability, it's certainly true that no one has time to read the submissions through thoroughly.

Flicking through the catalogue, I can't see that this has meant anything obviously anti- or irrelevant to feminism being included — though I'm faintly surprised to see that Maureen Duffy, who'll argue with vigorous fluency that writing is a genderless activity, believes her excellent *I Want to Go to Moscow* to be a 'feminist' novel.

What worry me more are the catalogue blurbs. Despite a small-print disclaimer ('All descriptions in this catalogue have been written by the publishers . . .'), the blurbs' all-too-natural enthusiasms could well, in the context in which they appear, be mistaken for outside endorsement — and I really can't believe that any group of feminists would *unambiguously* endorse the violence of Andrea Dworkin's *Ice and Fire*, or describe Susan Brownmiller's bland *Femininity* as being 'utterly explosive'. At least, the *same* group would scarcely do both, which does leave me feeling that the catalogue is short on aesthetic or political integrity.

Eyebrows have also been raised by the panel which selected the 20-book shortlist — not on account of any one member, but because it's composed of celebrities. In 1984 and 1985, it was a committee of grass-roots workers in the book trade who made the selection; this year, the pannel consists of writers Beatrix Campbell, Buchi Emecheta, Antonia Fraser, Alison Hennegan, Sheila Kitzinger and Sheila Rowbotham, actor Miriam Margolyes and children's book specialist Rosemary Stones — each woman choosing from a pre-selected batch of titles in her specialist area.

This has, in many ways, resulted in an unbalanced short list — certainly (and the source of yet another controversy) there are fewer 'lesbian titles' than last year: remarkably few considering, first, that several of the panel are openly lesbian and, second, how important lesbian culture, analysis and action have been to the shaping of British feminism.

Carol Spedding, the Fortnight's overall organiser, concedes that lesbian perceptions are less represented than in previous years (years which she also organised) but points out that, last year, similar complaints were raised in the opposite direction. The panel, she says, was reminded to be on the lookout for homophobia, but its members were essentially 'choosing their favourites' without any obligation to balance their final choice with the others'.

By choosing panelists from pre-determined areas of interest (women's studies, the arts, children's books, fiction, biography, 'mind and body') it was felt that the short list would open out in directions that it hasn't before, but the celebrity panel was also, says Spedding, 'a commercial decision'. The Fortnight is, she is firm about this, 'primarily a *trade* promotion'.

To doubts expressed about the catalogue, she exhibits similar firmness: for mainstream publishers to look at their lists and decide for themselves what's 'feminist' is, she believes, a positive step. 'We want to encourage publishers to define books as feminist; we want them to *want* to be associated with the word.'

Nor, despite all the quibbles above, do they seem to have misunderstood it so badly. Of the 15 publishers with short-listed books, 11 aren't feminist houses, yet each of the titles has obvious roots in the last 20 years of feminist theory, consciousness raising and action.

If the Fortnight is unabashedly commercial, ritzy, eclectic, unrigorous — if, in short, it's middle-of-the-road — then at least it's treading to that middle of the road the seeds, earth and humus of more revolutionary, edgy feminist debates and creativities. And those who are worried that these might merely get swept into tidy, neutralised piles can always attend the 'fringe' events* which, if past years are anything to go by, will ensure that the dust keeps flying.

●

LESBIAN writers might also like to know about **Symposium 87**, a forthcoming European lesbian and gay writers' conference to be held in Conway Hall in London from 17-20 April 1987. Registration (£25) opens early this month. For further details ring Martin Foreman on 01-981 4275 or write to Symposium 87, BM 8252 London WC1N 3XX.

Harriett Gilbert

**For details of talks, readings and workshops connected with Feminist Book Fortnight ring 0603-621209 (Norwich area), Melinda Riley on 0742-734750 (Sheffield area) or 01-402 8159 (London area and elsewhere).*

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CINEMA

Putting dad in the picture

Adam Mars-Jones

Geraldine Page plus wandering hands taking *The Trip to Bountiful*

Six Nix Hicks Pix
ICA to 14 June
The Trip to Bountiful (U)
Screen on the Hill, Screen on Baker Street, Screen on Islington Green, Electric Screen
Goodbye, New York (15)
ABCs Fulham Rd and Golders Green

BEHIND THE CABALISTIC title **Six Nix Hicks Pix** lurk half a dozen films, lasting between ten minutes and an hour, by young British film makers. One or two of them seem to derive more from pop videos than from anything genuinely cinematic; they look like ominous advertisements. But at least one film in each of the two programmes has more to show.

Gerry Feeney's *The Discovery of Gravity* combines 17th-century dialogue and country-house shenanigans *à la* Greenaway with a Jarmanesque addiction to anachronism. The result, concerning an imaginary scientist pipped at the post by Newton, is quirky almost to the point of certifiability, but has enough wit to keep it bowling along. At one stage the scientist's uncle, who has been footing the bills for some expensive research, asks for results: instantly there appears under his astonished periwig a sort of holographic orrery of computer graphics.

The other notable success is Harry Hook's *Sins of the Father,* which should by rights be a preposterous soup of adolescent themes. A young man visits his father — who deserted the family many years previously — on an island off East Africa. The old man spends his time collecting Islamic poetry and is strongly resistant to the claims of blood.

A son's search for a father tends to presuppose the suppression of a mother; it usually amounts to an evasion masquerading as an exploration. To make matters worse, Hook's hero is (implausibly) training for the priesthood, just so that we know that he's searching for meaning. But Hook's directing of his own father in the role of Colonel Hyde and of Jonathan Dockar-Drysdale in the role of the son carries real conviction. Hook rather too often casts the sea in an ostentatiously symbolic role, but his film — made in 1982, when he was in his early twenties — has a quietly pleasing shape and many gratifying moments.

This week's commercial releases are respectable at best. **The Trip to Bountiful** is justified as a project by Geraldine Page's Oscar-or-bust performance in the lead. The 1953 television play on which the film is based is described by the star as having 'the patina of a piece of fur', by which she may mean furniture. The story is certainly a shiny old tippet, despite being the first teleplay to be deposited in the Museum of Modern Art's archives. It concerns a widow's attempt to return, against the wishes of her weak son and hateful daughter-in-law, to the little town where she was born.

Geraldine Page sings hymns, reminisces, chuckles, wipes away tears. Her hands patrol her face like a nervous hostess fidgeting with a place setting. She strokes the side of her mouth with a finger, checks her eyes again for moisture, bunches her hand by the side of her nose as if to hide behind it.

It would be an exaggeration to say that she finds truth in the part of Carrie Watts, but she gets a lot of work out of her face and she's never actually embarrassing. Her intonation can cope with dialogue rich in corn-pone: 'Isn't that nice', she will say, or 'I'm mighty partial to scissortails'. She saves her best delivery for the line delivered in the all-but-deserted main street of Harrison: 'I been to Harrison quite a few times in my life . . . *shoppin'* '. She makes shopping sound like a dance craze her audience may not remember.

If Geraldine Page just about carries *The Trip to Bountiful,* Julie Hagerty is strapped helplessly to **Goodbye, New York**. This actress mines the same vein of winning witlessness as Goldie Hawn and the film itself has links with Hawn's *Private Benjamin.* Both pretend to be about dreams and female

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strength, while defining realism and independence as dwelling exclusively in patriarchal institutions.

Goodbye, New York is in all but name an advertisement for Israel. Julie Hagerty's character Nancy quits her job in New York and, coming home to tell him the news, surprises her husband with another woman. She decides to realise a long-held dream — what would a woman be without a dream? — and visit Paris. Emotionally shell-shocked and drugged with valium, she oversleeps her stop and arrives instead in Tel Aviv, with no money and no luggage. Soon she is working in a kibbutz.

Nancy's IQ veers at the screenplay's whim from the low 30s to the upper 80s. One moment she is defeated by the banana harvest, by chicken-counting, by cooking, the next she is saving the kibbutz from dishonest tradesmen, her roommate from exploitative men and stray children from drowning.

Israel, a country without internal problems, is apparently America without the mistakes. Amos Kollek's lamentable screenplay contains a cameo appearance by Teddy Kollek, mayor of Jerusalem and the author-director's father. Teddy Kollek listens to Nancy's troubles and suggests she talk to the mayor. Geddit?

Kollek junior has also written himself the romantic lead. This enables him to say such lines as this, while giving Nancy a guided tour of Jerusalem: 'People come here from all over the world to get buried . . . not just the PLO.' Avoiding this film should not be difficult; if on a plane — even on the way to Tel Aviv — decline the headphones. □

MUSIC

Other voices

Charles Fox

John Surman
Shaw Theatre

JOHN SURMAN WAS ONCE the most ubiquitous jazz musician in London, an anchor-man in Mike Westbrook's band, partnering Mike Osborne in another group, surfacing in *ad hoc* ensembles such as Chris McGregor's Big Band — and, in addition, 'sitting in' somewhere almost every night of the week. He lived what was then imagined to be the jazz life, never needing to practise because he performed so much.

That was 20 years ago. Nowadays Surman's appearances in Britain are infrequent. He spends most of his playing time — like any British jazz musician who wants to avoid penury — touring in Europe and more far-flung parts. Practising has become important. And, to the pair of saxophones — baritone and soprano — that he blew with such reckless ease, he has added the bass clarinet, while also, even more significantly, making synthesisers a part of his everyday musical life.

If there has been a diminution of improvising in public, composing in private takes up more and more time. And not just putting notes on paper but using overdubbing to create entire LPs on which nobody except Surman can be heard, each piece generally shortish but allowing the composer to edit his own playing, to merge and overlay and make improbable connections. Yet more latterly there has been the partnership with Karin Krog, a Norwegian singer who has triumphantly surmounted the problem of accent that normally besets non-English speakers who choose to sing in English. Krog is an imaginative performer in her own right, but the most stimulating side of her collaboration with Surman involves their use of high-tech, the way phasers and echo-chambers and other bits of electronic equipment allow them to construct bizarre duets, trios, even quartets with themselves and each other (an intricate foray of this sort provided one of the best moments at Saturday's Shaw Theatre concert).

Surman's early playing was mostly exuberant, a warm-hearted reaction to what his companions were up to. But over the years an endemic romanticism has nudged its way to the fore, balancing high spirits with a hint of melancholy, what seems frolicsome often ending up with a dying fall. (A fine example of this came about on Saturday when Surman, playing soprano saxophone, duetted with the pianist John Taylor in 'Tess', its title and *raison d'être* both grounded in Thomas Hardy.) Side by side with these developments has come a shying away from various conventions that, a quarter of a century ago, were still considered inseparable from jazz. The rhythm section, for instance.

The urge to do fresh things, to weld different sounds together, no doubt prompted John Surman's decision to collaborate with a choir. It was, if memory serves me faithfully, Sir Thomas Beecham who once summed up a ladies' choir which he was conducting as 'Forty miles of varicose veins'. Cantamus, the girls' choir that took part in Surman's concert, could never be described so ungallantly. Looking positively Tudor in burgundy smocks with white collars (there was a shift to blue during the interval), the 40 girls began with pieces from their own repertoire — two settings of D. H. Lawrence poems and a study in textures by Nigel Osborne, all pretty impressive — before getting to grips with Surman's music.

Jazz musicians have attempted this coupling before. Duke Ellington composed a quantity of sacred works during his later years, even having one performed in Westminster Abbey. Max Roach used a choir on an LP of spirituals and gospel songs. And a couple of years ago the white Texan tenor saxophonist Bennie Wallace recorded with a black gospel quartet. But in each case those involved interaction between what might be called two branches of Afro-American music.

Surman, on the other hand, belongs to a generation of European musicians who realised how important it was to reflect something of their own background. Jazz and blues may have ravished them from a very early age, yet those idioms sprang from a highly American set of circumstances. It is interesting in retrospect to note that when John Surman appeared on *Desert Island Discs* a couple of years ago his choices included not only Charlie Parker and John Coltrane but Bach's *St Matthew Passion* and Kathleen Ferrier's 'Blow the Wind Southerly'. Surman even went on to confess to Roy Plomley that, as a schoolboy, he had been renowned for his 'O for the wings of a dove'.

Which may help to explain why, with a 40-piece choir at his beck and call, he allowed it to sound very much as choirs did in the churches of Totnes or Devonport. In the foreground the three soloists — Surman, Karin Krog and the pianist John Taylor — asserted their identities as jazz performers inevitably do. Surman, in particular, wheedled an extraordinary range of sounds from his saxophones and bass clarinet, a typical blending of idiosyncrasy and virtuosity. What he did not succeed in doing was to turn the choir into an extension of his musical thinking. They sang impeccably but also anonymously. Good intentions abounded. The concert even concluded with a tribute to Mother Teresa, Surman's soprano saxophone glistening as Karin Krog intoned a catalogue of saintly virtues. What was missing was a genuine overlap between two very separate musical worlds. □

DANCE

Comic strip

Stephanie Jordan

Mantis Dance Company
Riverside
Yolande Snaith
ICA

FAUST IS NOT Micha Bergese's first flight into theatrical magic and story telling: he has been here before with the Derek Jarman-designed *Mouth of the Night*. It is, however, his most ambitious piece of this kind.

Made for his own **Mantis Dance Company**, it is a three-act paraphrase of Goethe apparently inspired by childhood memories of Bergese's native Germany — though it is doubtful whether it expresses much of that country's post-war agony. Bergese remains roughly faithful to the bold outline of Part One as employed in Gounod's opera, but disregards Goethe's theological debate, the struggle in heaven for Faust's soul, the dilemma of man's willingness to make wrong choices. He follows the easier synopsis of the disintegrating academic led astray by a cardboard villain offering rejuvenation at a price.

Bergese's simple aim seems to be to spice up the classic to appeal to today's sceptical audiences. The result is less romantic or intellectual than scintillating and jokey. The designer Victoria Brill's facetious comic-strip presentation of the story in the programme makes the point — 'It's lust at first sight', etc. — as does the conclusion where Margaretha

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gives the finger from her pink cloudy salvation to Faust and Mephistopheles in red hell. The work is declaredly reset in a 'Fifties ballroom — bright colours, loud music and bizarre furniture': girls (Temptations/Witches) in ponytails and full skirts; the student Wagner clean-cut and in specs; Mephistopheles (Bergese) in spiv suit; the courting Faust (Jacob Marley) in questionable, luminous green shorts.

Faust is drilled by a seemingly glamorous electronic score by David Cunningham (a suite of pieces rather deliberate in span, its buds of invention generally failing to bloom) and enlivened by a horde of young extras recruited from each locality Mantis visits. At no point can Bergese prove that the tale is proper material for his theatrical treatment. While as a performer he himself possesses undoubted dramatic flair (recall his compelling wolfman in Neil Jordan's *The Company of Wolves*), he demonstrates little ability to handle narrative or interplay involving other protagonists , nor can his six-strong company carry the work as actors. Characters have little substance; there's been no attempt to develop them.

The work contains a multitude of dance styles, including world-of-entertainment clichés and yards of steps neither assisting nor illustrating the narrative. From his dance background, Bergese draws complicated Cunningham shapes and moves, but this is dancerly abstraction in unsuitable circumstances. Brill's design is the chief asset, an effusion of Bakstian colour in a large backdrop, a parade of costumes (many changes) and an extravagance of props, including an endearing set of 'creatures', part animal/insect, part human. Each surface of the stage is bounded by rows of electric bulbs, like Harrods at night, effective if flashy. Alas, most of the rest of Charlie Paton's lighting is diffident, much of the stage action seeming flat and some of it lost in gloom.

I missed **Yolande Snaith**'s appearance at this year's Dartington Festival (see *NS* 2 May). Since then, she has been active around London in a number of solo and collaborative projects and has confirmed that, of all the recent products of her new dance school, hers is the most distinct choreographic voice, one which knows exactly how to channel a point of view into a cogent act.

Blue-Whiteness Rhapsody is a solo that Snaith has continued to develop over several months and demonstrates more finely than most how to integrate the elements of costumes to meet a subtle purpose. The piece, which started from 'ideals of feminine purity', juxtaposes references obliquely so that the audience has to be alert in order to perceive the logical connexions. We see woman as a chalky icon, twitching and palpitating, enclosed in white robes, then unfolding into an alarmingly distended Greek caryatid (underneath the dress, Snaith stands on a stool). She comes to life in a vile foundation garment, petticoated, girdled and brassiered, and obsessively sponges herself and her perch. Gradually, Snaith breaks out of her institutions. At one point, she indulges in a furious bout of keep-fit; later, in an impassioned duet with the stool. Near the end, her stool removed to a far corner, an organic flow of motion takes over: long, curling, undulating and tumbling phrases, repetition now of an ecstatic kind. If the blue whiteness of the title has suggested up to now a detergent purity, this section must be the 'rhapsody', the release.

Snaith's is a finely paced and multi-faceted work, abrupt punctuation giving way to pleasant flow, sharpened by wit and appropriately chaste in colour and accompaniment: white costumes and props (a touch of blue in the sponge) and cool sound of Dowland and Monteverdi songs, a Chopin piano miniature and newborn lambs. The stool is an effective and versatile symbol for pedestal, domestic possession or captivity. At the end, Snaith returns to this, her base, sitting tautly, expectantly, unfinished like the Bach that accompanies her. □

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THEATRE

All for love

Benedict Nightingale

Dalliance
SCHNITZLER adapted by TOM STOPPARD
Lyttelton
Medea
EURIPIDES *Lyric, Hammersmith*
Creditors
STRINDBERG *Almeida*

THESE THIN-LIPPED times, we don't tend to believe that people can bleed for love, let alone kill or die for it. But it wasn't always so; indeed it wasn't usually so, as plays of differing climes and times have proceeded to remind us over the past week or so.

After *Antony and Cleopatra*, which I've already anatomised in these columns, there comes *Dalliance*, which ends with an emotionally exploited girl exiting to what, though rather less in Tom Stoppard's adaptation than in Schnitzler's original, sounds suspiciously like suicide at her lover's grave. Then off to *Medea*, to see the most celebrated of all abandoned women punish her husband by killing their children and his new wife. Add *Creditors*, at whose denouement a young man expires in an ecstasy of sexual jealousy, and you'll be left feeling that, whatever gains our theatre may have made elsewhere, it has lost something in the heart area.

Dalliance, a much better title for *Liebelei* than the customary 'Love Games', provides the answer to anyone still inclined to see Schnitzler as a weary cynic, smiling at human error over his absinthe from a table on some Viennese boulevard. He's as painfully aware of the spiritual futility of the drabbing-and-duelling class as, judging by the play's evidence, some of its members are of their own. The reaction of Fritz, the young roué at the centre of *Dalliance*, to a life-threatening challenge from a cuckolded husband is a shrugging 'it doesn't matter', even 'what a relief'. But the evening's main revelation is the dramatist's handling of the *'susse Mädel'*, or working-class 'sweet girl', whom his protagonist has casually seduced as a temporary respite and distraction from a more serious affair. Schnitzler takes Christine as seriously as she does Fritz's 'love'. She's destroyed by it; and that *does* matter.

Stoppard sometimes stamps his verbal trademarks playfully on the text — 'I know not seems,' quotes a young blood, learning that his new mistress is a seamstress — but not at the cost of sensitivity, seriousness or fidelity to the pain inherent in the play. Those commodities even survive the resiting of the last act, transported from Christine's attic to a theatre in which a travesty dragoon and his travesty inamorata are rehearsing some travesty opera, in over-elaborately ironic counterpoint to the raw happenings just offstage. Perhaps Peter Wood, the director, could have got more from Stephen Moore, too trudgingly downbeat when it comes to incarnating either Fritz's charisma or his pre-fight nerves; but he's not been let down, or let himself be let down, by his other performers, least of all by the excellent actor who plays Christine, Brenda Blethyn.

The point about this character is that she breaks the rules, according to which women of her class are supposed to accept that sex is fun and fun is finite. Her love for Fritz is fierce and engulfing, and what's admirable about Blethyn's performance is that, not merely does she refuse to romanticise or sentimentalise Christine, she fully admits she's gauche, awkward, abjectly possessive and, because of that possessiveness, increasingly unattractive. If you like, she dares to be emotionally ugly; and yet, somehow, whether because of the openness of her vulnerability or the authenticity of her intensity or both, she keeps fundamental hold of the sympathies she's alienating at a more superficial level. 'I worshipped him, he was God and salvation, and I was his day off,' she mourns at the end, a flayed soul in the bland Viennese fleshpots; and one feels the cruelty, the hurt, and Schnitzler's dismay at the waste of it all.

If one can't say as much for Mary McMurray's revival of **Medea**, the most awesome play about the destructiveness of love ever written, it's for two prime reasons. Its visual and verbal colloquialism — Jason an over-age trendy in a jump-suit contemptuously lecturing the wife he's left for a fashionable young floozie about her 'sex-life' — reduces an elemental parable into a contemporary anecdote about the unwisdom of fobbing off a determined woman with vague

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offers of alimony. Also, Madhur Jaffrey simply doesn't have the emotional qualifications for so fell and baleful a protagonist. That her gestures are a bit more formal than those of the British performers around her doesn't matter, Medea being an alien among the smug, self-satisfied Greeks. That she knows how to sit, be still, listen and look dangerous is, of course, a positive gain. But the character is variously compared to a wild bull, a lioness and a hurricane; and, for that blend of biology and meteorology, Jaffrey has the power neither of voice, which tends towards the querulous, nor of heart, stomach, bowel and the other organs within.

On the other hand, Ian McDiarmid, Jonathan Kent and Suzanne Bertish — respectively vengeful first husband, emotionally maimed and exhausted second husband and the cause and object of their ado — do much to suggest that the often-ignored **Creditors** deserves a more central position in Strindberg's crazed oeuvre. Here, in close detail, is a case-study of the effects (as he sees them) of being obliged emotionally to depend on something emotionally, spiritually, even physically ruinous: namely, a creature which is 'a half-developed man, a child stunted in mid-growth, a case of chronic anaemia which has regular haemmorhages 13 times a year'. The pathology of acute misogyny is clear to be seen; but so is a willingness to present the point of view of a woman with her own ego, self-respect and life to lead. It's a paradoxical piece, bursting with agonised confusions: well worth boggling at. □

TELEVISION

Tits and balls

Hugo Williams

AS ALL THOSE WHITE footballs go cannoning over and over again into the net from four different angles, from four different continents, on four different channels, and buttocky little millionaires copulate briefly in mid-field, then fall to their knees in thanks to assorted gods, it is well to remember again where it all might lead if the international media rabble-rousing gets out of hand again: The Wall.

TV Eye (ITV) had the bright idea of escorting four of the victors of Heysel, due for extradition to Belgium to face charges of manslaughter, on a day trip to the scene of their triumph to see how they felt about it all in retrospect. 'Not very proud of course, but probably do the same again,' was the realistic answer of one such scapegoat.

Larry Whitman had identified himself on tape punching an Italian. What did he feel when he was charged with manslaughter? 'Shock. I'd expected affray.' Tim Williams was shown slowly picking up one of the flagpoles thoughtfully provided by Belgium to aid mutual understanding between supporters separated only by chicken wire. 'I feel like I let the family down,' he said. 'The wife's pregnant, but then the Italians all had little knives . . .' 'What *do* you admit to?' Kevin Hughes was asked. 'I don't admit to killing anyone.' A vivid interview with Kevin's parents found the family divided: 'Not guilty, no way,' said Mum, while her husband thought they should be punished.

To gain a conviction for manslaughter the Belgian courts will have to prove the Liverpool fans could have foreseen the consequences of their actions. What a joke! But supposing they succeed? 'English supporters have got a bad reputation all over the world,' said Kevin. 'There's no way you can get a fair trial. They're gonna throw away the key.' I believed him when he said that, if the scousers hadn't rushed them, *they* would have been the dead ones, but will a Belgian jury?

Another child of the tabloid mentality, permitted a rather unhappy insight on her case by television's tactful blend of hypocrisy, expediency and *schadenfreude*, was Sharon Jay, 15, in the repeated **Page Three Girls** (BBC2). Surely 'TV' stood for titivation here, as coy breast-shots masqueraded as . . . coy breast-shots, really, to all except poor Sharon, who seemed to have swallowed the documentary red herring whole. 'How far would you want her to go?' Sharon's mother was asked. 'Oh, just topless and fashion, I think, not pornographic.' Cut to Sharon's exploding tee shirt as a thousand lonely screens dripped with appreciation.

Unfortunately for Sharon, agents have an *idée fixe* about their work in the form of

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Samantha Fox, with whom Sharon compared unfavourably. Sharon's roots were showing, they said; her nails were too short; she needed to lose weight and gain confidence. Sharon takes this on board and a month later re-presents herself for 'photography'. 'What you could do is just let your fingers play with the lace a little bit there . . .' Sharon's bulges swell with unknown emotions, but the *Star* picture editor still thinks, 'She's not developed yet. She's frightened. She's got too much make-up on. She's still got a long way to go before she's a *Star*bird.' This anachronistic gatefold-substitute closed with a cynical shot of Sharon writing off to yet more agents with her vital statistics: 'Dear Sir, I enclose . . .' until you almost had to feel sorry for the bastards.

The Shetland Islands lie about half way between Scotland and Norway. Their inhabitants' speech is similarly located, but the women who put together *The Work They Say Is Mine* for **People to People** (C4) made up in feeling for what one missed of their Scandinavian vowel-sounds. In the last century the knitting women of the islands got paid part of their wages in kind, which left them well dressed but starving and led naturally to casual prostitution. Added to this, 'you'd see the same knits down south for five and six times the price,' said an old woman. 'I'd come home from school and see me mam standing by the old iron knitter and she was so intent on counting loops she'd just answer "uh-huh" to everything.'

This too was a film of exploitation, but at least one woman had fought back: 'I discovered men were doing the easier job cutting the peat and women the harder clearing for them, so I started cutting my own.' The film showed how the colours of the Shetland landscape have found their way into the famous Shetland patterns over the years, while a Shetland punk sang, 'All I wanted was a revolution . . .' 'I would love to have been an engineer and gone to sea,' said an old woman.

Two wonderful programmes called **Tradewinds** (BBC2) brought us stories of the old Western Ocean Sailing Yachts that plied out of Wales until just after the First World War. In the first, a captain described the experience of being adrift in mid-Atlantic while a U-boat calmly scuppered his beloved ship. By a lucky chance, a propaganda film of the incident had been made by the U-boat and the flickering images of sub versus sail made poignant accompaniment to his memories: 'They didn't even say goodbye and left us there in the middle of that ocean . . .'

A second film in the series was an evocation of Callao, a port on the west coast of Peru, once the last great meeting place for the old wooden sailing ships out of South Wales and still bearing many signs from those days in the Celt-influenced dock area of Happyland bars where sailors would try to escape from 'The Hardest Trade in the World' of quarrying guano.

'It was fearful work to go under those shoots in rough water . . . clouds of guano so dense no one could see or breathe and lives were lost every day.' One remembered the sea-struck Shetlander quarrying peat and reflected that she had been lucky to miss her vocation on such a mission. □

Airborne

Naseem Khan

TURWESTON AIRFIELD isn't much to look at from the air. Even when you land, there's little to be seen: windswept turf, neglected runway. This isn't one of your plump airfields with G and Ts in the clubhouse: just grass, sky and no frills. Which is exactly why, after a long saga, Steel 'n' Skin's Project Solo has come to be based there.

The story began seven years ago when the Black music group got an unexpected cheque for VAT returns. Instead of ploughing it back into hand-outs for the group (who frankly could have done with it, since community music is hardly ritzy), they did something that must be unprecedented. They bought a glider. It wasn't a grand glider, rather the equivalent, said the band's Peter Blackman, who stumbled on it in a yard, of an old banger. But it was sturdy, serviceable and within their means. The £1,400 cheque was written, and Steel 'n' Skin became the proud owners of a 1959 Slingsby T21. Then their problems began.

Having a glider is one thing. Having a home for it is another. In the months that followed, Blackman toured every airfield within reasonable reach of London. One after another they turned him down. It wasn't just the glider, but the extended package Steel 'n' Skin wanted to start: they would use the glider to train kids in care, the unemployed, people from women's centres. Their priority would be Black and Asian women. Moreover they would operate a block membership system rather than the system in operation where each person has to join a club. (Current rates for a glider club could set you back £150 a year — plus £60 entry fee — and that doesn't include any flying costs.) Certainly not, said airfield after airfield. After three years, Peter Blackman was about ready to call it a day. And then his luck changed.

A friend told him about a loner, called Albert Tarnow, who ran a one-man airfield out near Brackley, Northants. Tarnow, who had been an engineering designer and had also worked with probation kids, was clearly not just another armchair Biggles. To Blackman's delight, he agreed without question. The scheme made perfect sense to him. 'Almost within days,' said Blackman, 'we had people flying.'

With Tarnow on their side, the scheme — Project Solo, since its aim was to get people to the point where they could qualify to fly alone — took off. And when that friend of small causes, the GLC, stepped in, they could consolidate their operations. Unemployment centres sent groups, so did children's homes, probation services, tenants' associations. When I was there, eight excited women from a West London community centre were having their first-ever flights. In the evening they gave way to a regular group from a local boys' home.

Blackman justifies Project Solo on two counts. First, there are the intrinsic lessons to be learnt from gliding. 'It builds your confidence,' he argues. 'It teaches you how to take command. You're totally responsible for your own actions.' It's easy to see what he means. Up in the air a touch on the stick sends you and plane plunging sickeningly downwards. As one of the women said with macabre glee, it's like being on the big dipper without any rails.

Concentration is needed in large measures, co-ordination, responsiveness (to wind, thermals, clouds), decisiveness, self-reliance and courage. They are all qualities that Project Solo's client groups could do with. His boys had benefited enormously, said the teacher from the approved school wholeheartedly.

Secondly, Blackman gets no little delight from boring a hole in the wall of privilege. There's a firm idea on the streets, he said, that flying is for 'them up there'. (Indeed, there's a firm idea of that too in the minds of some of the funding bodies they've approached. 'Flying?' snorted one Labour councillor, 'I can't afford to go flying myself.') Day after day Steel 'n' Skin are demonstrating that this assumption is not necessarily true, and that delights — like the very real one of floating above the earth — do not have notices on them saying Keep Off. Above all, as a qualified instructor himself now, Blackman is an ever-present proof that Black people can aspire to positions of authority.

The achievements of Project Solo are mainly grassroots and gained with great effort. Three years on, they've been well used. Twenty people can now, under the rules of the British Gliding Association, fly solo — a boost to the ego that has little equal. But, in another sense, Steel 'n' Skin are as far from their overall objective as they were seven years ago when Blackman first saw the T21. They have no capital funding. Organisations that see their value are mainly voluntary ones working in the front-line of social action. What they need, at the very least, is a tie-in to local authority at a more central level, to be part of an overall strategy — and one that doesn't consider the gliding in isolation.

The broader Steel 'n' Skin package is even more visionary. Back in London there's a small recording studio where young groups can record and cut tapes. In another room, the group is building up a computer facility to train school dropouts. Meanwhile, on the road, Steel 'n' Skin music group perform their rock-based music by night and take schools workshops in music and dance skills by day. Working like guerrillas on different and often unconnected areas of assault, they have the potential to make an exciting and relevant facility: one where arts, sport and education healthily mix. □

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Man on an omnibus

Gillian Wilce

I HAVE A complaint about men's knees. It extends, if I try to be very precise, to substantial chunks of their thighs, but not to what my mother's generation referred to as their other bits and pieces.

This complaint is not informed by class bias, sees no age differences, cuts across types of physique. Ironed pin-striped knees and scuffed denim knees, shiny navy-suiting-ed knees and designer track-suited knees, little pointy knees and big beefy knees are all just as much at fault. Women who travel regularly on public transport, particularly buses (if this were an underground article, I might have a complaint about men's elbows, but that's another story), will recognise the phenomenon.

You finally make it on to a crowded 73 in the rush hour. You find just one empty seat two-thirds the way down the top deck. That is, what you actually find is a part-empty seat because the man on the window side, while he may have his bottom more or less on his own half, has his legs splayed like a celluloid cowboy astride a back-to-front chair.

What most of us then do is to fold ourselves into the small triangle of seat remaining, our own knees primly together, our balance maintained by willpower alone as we try to avoid over-warm thigh-to-thigh contact on one side and tripping up the conductor on the other.

If you're made of firmer fabric and hazard an 'excuse me' as you sit down, you'll probably be rewarded with a grunt and a quarter-inch shift of the whole structure but no basic anatomical re-arrangement. And, if you're too cowardly to complain but irritated enough to adopt guerrilla tactics like 'accidentally' ramming the corner of your handbag into the encroaching limb, said limb usually remains impervious and you end up feeling petty and even, in spite of yourself, sorry for being such a nuisance as to want to sit down at all.

Naturally women can take up plenty of space but, for them, it often involves some kind of necessity, like simply being very large or encumbered with small children or shopping. Oddly (though perhaps not so, if you think about it), this kind of space problem often appears at its worst on the long seat downstairs near the door. Were people actually smaller when the Routemaster was designed? Never mind the three bags of groceries and the wriggling toddler, it's difficult enough just attempting to fit four average British bums into the accommodation offered them there.

The long seat is productive of social quandaries worthy of Miss Manners's attention. The dilemma of the fourth-person-in is especially troublesome. Do you insinuate, thrust or squeeze yourself backwards until all four of you are jammed cheek to cheek, as it were, against the back of the seat? Or do you perch on the edge, buttocks tensed, allowing the other three bums to spread to their normal width but yourself a stumbling block to traffic in the aisle and, what is more, unsecured as you are, liable to find yourself hurled across strange laps if the driver feels moved to a bit of Brands Hatch cornering.

Altogether, bus travel is reminiscent of those experiments which demonstrate that the more rats you cram into a small space the more bad-tempered they are likely to get. Except that, in my experience, passengers are surprisingly patient and conductors in general remain laudably cheerful in situations that would have the average rat stropping its teeth.

There are still jesters among the conductors ('What? No one for St George's? Busload of heathen I've got here, have I?); most deal quite imperturbably with the ebb and flow of the ignorant public ('Plis? Creestal Palis?' 'No mate. You're all wrong. You want a number three. But you'll have to get off, cross over, go back the way we've come . . .'); and some care for their domains like mother hens ('I am not,' I once heard one say as he ejected a fighting drunk, 'having my bus all upset.').

Still, sang-froid, Dunkirk spirit or no, it is infuriating — especially when you've just pulled through one of those stampedes that so often passes for a queue — to meet one of those knees. Once I'd started to notice the phenomenon it began to seem so pervasive and so peculiarly masculine that I did wonder whether I wasn't being somehow very unfair. After all, I don't know what it feels like to be a man, have a man's body. Perhaps there was actually some physiological reason why men couldn't comfortably sit as women do, neatly, knees together. In the end I consulted a doctor friend — in his dual capacity as man and physician. Was it, I asked, you know, difficult in any way for men to, well, keep their legs together for any length of time? When incomprehension and then mirth had had their way, I gathered that the answer was 'no'.

Which brings me safely back to my complaint. As far as I'm concerned men can do exactly what they like with their own knees in private, but I do object to them spreadeagling their legs all over my half of the seat in order to make themselves a briefcase table or a nice little space to dangle their hands in. And let no one tell me that, whatever the width of the knees, it's the length of the leg that makes it hard for men: I'm taller than the average man and have long been used to managing on a third of a seat and keeping my knees well under control. □

Weekend competition

No 2927 **Set by George Cowley**

Mrs Thatcher once, famously, quoted St Francis of Assissi. Could we have suitable biblical quotations for use by other prominent people? Max. six quotes per entrant, by 19 June.

No 2924 **Set by May Day**

Duets, or extracts of dialogue, from a musical featuring Thatcher and Reagan.

Report **By Mercy Dash**

Gosh, you were so jolly brilliant this week that I won't take up any more room — except to give some *ultra*special mentions to Catherine Benson, Nigel Bunker, Lissa Evans, Sid Field, Katie Mallett, Alison Prince . . . oh, just *dozens* of you. Twelve pounds a shot to the winners (even Basil, whose dialogue doesn't *really* come from a musical, does it.)

MT: What have you been doing lately? During these last weeks?
RR: Counteracting terrorism. Our planes went off after . . .
MT: Yes, yes I know. How was it?
RR: Libya? Very flattened.
MT: And Russia?
RR: Very hot.
MT: That ghastly thing at . . .
RR: I know.
MT: Unbelievable, a sort of dream.
RR: You must have seen it through my eyes.
MT: Yes, American propaganda is cruelly deceptive.
RR: It's an awful load of tosh, actually.
MT: Darling, darling, I love you so.
RR: I always imagine him in his tent. Probably reading his holy books. Then the planes come.
MT: I wonder if they'll come for me one day. I mean, to take me away.
RR: You'll always be mine.
MT: Till death . . .?
RR: Of course. It doesn't matter about life, but it matters terribly about death.

BASIL RANSOME-DAVIES

RR: You're the tops: you're a Star Wars boffin,
You're the nails in Gaddafy's coffin,
You're a wire from the head of Bayer on
rejuvenation pills,
You're a first strike mock-up,
A Russian cock-up —
You're Chernobyl!
MT: You're the tops: you're the Falklands fever
You're the dole for a young school leaver;
I'm defeat in the Ryedale seat, I'm a Biffin bleat
— a flop!
But if, Ronnie, I'm the bottom, you're the top!

ELIZABETH B. PATRICK

RR: You said I do.
MT: I said you did.
RR: It was a coup.
MT: You flipped your lid.
RR: But yes, we dismembered them well . . .

RR: I wanted planes.
MT: You wanted dash.
RR: I had the brains.
MT: You had the cash.
RR: But still, we dismembered them well . . .

RR: That dazzling Libyan loon!
MT: He had lots of oil, and you struck too soon.
MT: Gee, it was our soil.
It makes me proud to know the ease
With which we take our liberties —
And yes, we dismembered them well . . .

WILL BELLENGER

MT: Tonight, tonight,
The world's been set alight,
With Libyans dead all over the place.
Delight! Ignite!
Drop bombs to left and right,
Smash their homes, burn their kids, leave no trace
—
RR: Today, the whiners said my rages
Would lead to more outrages,
Goldarn it if they're right.
Oh bombs, rain down,
And blow these commie creeps to the heights,
Tonight.

GERARD MORRIS

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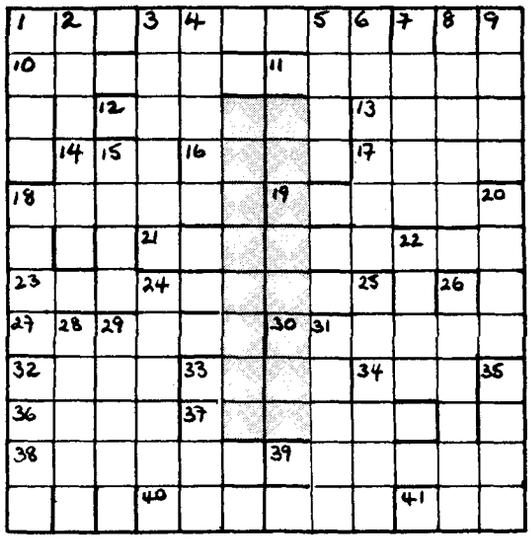
Salamanca 108

'Armchair Detective: Whodunit?'

PRIZE: £35 cheque for the first correct solution opened. Entries to Salamanca 108, New Statesman, 14-16 Farringdon Lane, London EC1R 3AU, by first post 1 July.



The shaded columns of the grid contain a murderer and his victim. Twelve suspects are unclued, their unchecked letters giving KEY TRUTH BONUS.

Name_____

Address_____

ACROSS

10 For morbid condition with the 'vapours' I had, one MO's treated? (6)
11 Useful tip for the killer who's not a *dead* shot? (6)
12 See, tears square bags, to get to these? (6)
13 Old part of funeral ceremonies (4)
14 Tree, classic English one with different top (one must separate the two of course!) (3)
18 Pursuit of the *wildly* ambitious? (6)
19 Cut into a dictionary with a sort of knife? (6)
21 Clew: North-east parts to display this (tho river's included) (9)
23 Provisions sailors need in wind, in violent blows (9)
27 Poor and worthless place in old back of beyond — whence comes hick? (6)
30 Bird-man, also King: part of natural life of Africa (6)
32 Gorse: with it in, it's on the inside? (4)
33 *Bits of old songs by Dylan, Marley,* etc.? (4)
34 See one struck by end of arrow — what would 36 say? (3)
38 Stop and listen and cause to be esteemed (6)
39 Drug, a little contained in cooked meals (6)

DOWN

2 Session of improvisation on record won't move because of it? (6)
3 Curved ridge (raised) on disreputable house of wood in Scotland (6)
4 Vegetables I left in this for pickling one time (5)
5 Old fellow that's lazy, taking half-measure of milk, American at heart (4)
6 Flowing does, right, round end of shore? (6)
7 Where in Africa will you find Libreville? Keep talking and you'll get it! (5)
8 Leads to door, running in via entrance (5)
15 Gathered by garbage wagon (4)
18 The point of blessings poured over society (4)
20 The cards for a bit of bridge? (4)
22 It's like a horn, except turning up at one end (4)
24 This dainty of Mac's usen't to be cooked over top of kiln (6)
25 He's case for changing order, one withdrawing (in US) (6)
26 Murder weapon observed to have thin tense blade (6)
28 Irish cry denoting cessation (somebody's passed over) (5)
29 Semiconductor device one held by clip on edge of table (5)
31 Slaves that were found in one's nest (5)
33 Dull book note (4)

Solution to Salamanca 107

Answers either TWIST on entry or include words meaning ASKED FOR (more, i.e. extra)

Prizewinner to Salamanca 107

Richard England (London EC4)

Note: The solution and prizewinner to Setsquare 1519 will appear next week.

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Reformers and Modernisation in Early Nineteenth Century Germany
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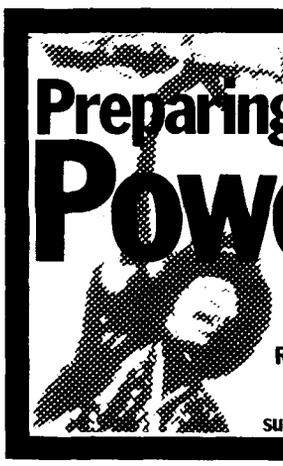

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AGENDA

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SAT 7 JUNE

WOMEN FROM NICARAGUA'S Atlantic Coast will be speaking on the current situation in Nicaragua and in particular on the Atlantic coast. 2.30pm at the London Women's Centre, 70 Great Queen Street, WC2. Org by the Women's Network of Nicaragua Solidarity Campaign.

LABOUR FRIENDS OF PALESTINE. The Labour Movement and Palestine — Which Way Forward? Holborn Library Hall, Theobalds Road, London WC1. (Holborn Tube). Speakers: **Lord Caradon**, designer of UN Resolution 242 and British representative at UN in 1967; **Larry Smith**, Asst General Secretary TGWU, reports on visit to West Bank and Gaza; **Saysal Aowivh**, PLO representative in London; **Harry Cohen** MP. Chair: **Joan Maynard** MP. Registration 9.30am.

SUN 8 JUNE

BRINGING THE NEWS FROM NOWHERE. Leon Rosselson in Concert. 8pm, Tricycle Theatre, Kilburn. 01-328 8626.

JEWISH SOCIALIST GROUP meeting with Ben Turok on South Africa. 8pm, Friends International Centre, Byng Place, Torrington Place, WC1.

MON 9 JUNE

AGAINST ALL WAR. How we can change the world. 8.15pm Muswell Hill Library, Queens Ave., N10. Adm. free. Enfield & Haringey Branch, The Socialist Party of GB.

THURS 12 JUNE

LABOUR AND THE LAND. Public meeting at Heath Farm, Swerford (1 mile west of South Newington on A361). Come and hear about Labour's policies for agriculture and the rural areas with speakers: Geoff Beer of Agricultural and Allied Workers Trade Group; Christine Collette, Labour's Prospective Parliamentary Candidate for Witney; Dave Wetzel on Labour Land Campaign. Org. Witney Constituency Labour Party.

FRI 13 JUNE

READINGS AT SISTERWRITE, 190 Upper Street, London N1. 7pm, **Moy McCrory** reads from her new book, *The Water's Edge and Other Stories*, which portrays the lives of Irish Liverpudlians. All Women Welcome. Adm free. Wheelchair access. Phone 01-226 9782 for details.

SAT 28 JUNE

DIVIDED BRITAIN: A Challenge for the Labour Movement. Conference organised by the **Child Poverty Action Group.** 10am-4pm, University of London Union, Malet Street, London WC1. Speakers include: Rodney Bickerstaffe (NUPE), Margaret Prosser (TGWU), John Smith MP and Jo Richardson MP. Tickets (£6 waged/£2 unwaged) and full details from: Sarah Hart, CPAG, 1 Macklin Street, London WC2B 5NH.

TUES 8 JULY

NO TO STAR WARS, YES TO NUCLEAR DISARMAMENT. CND Lobby, 2.30 — 10pm, House of Commons. Also 3 public meetings, stalls, exhibitions & creche, Central Hall Westminster. CND 01-250 4010.

FORTHCOMING

SOCIAL RESEARCH ASSOCIATION SUMMER EVENT. Austin Mitchell MP "Research: a useful tool in the political process?" 17 July 1986, 5pm. Room CM507, Main Building, City University, Northampton Street, EC1. £3.50 members/£4.50 non-members. *Info:* Norma Clayton 01-884 3058.

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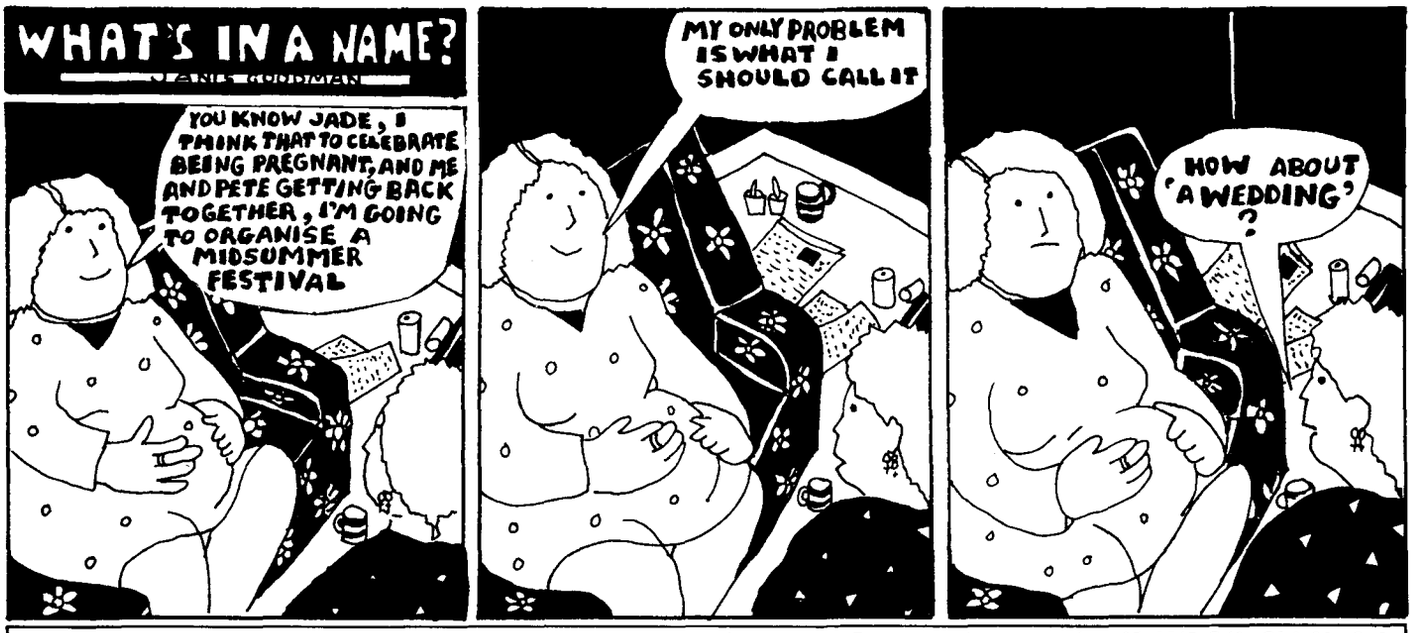
WHAT'S IN A NAME?
JANE GOODMAN
YOU KNOW JADE, I THINK THAT TO CELEBRATE BEING PREGNANT, AND ME AND PETE GETTING BACK TOGETHER, I'M GOING TO ORGANISE A MIDSUMMER FESTIVAL
MY ONLY PROBLEM IS WHAT I SHOULD CALL IT
HOW ABOUT 'A WEDDING'?

CHESS

WE CAME SECOND in both the matches that British GMs were involved in last month. Miles lost in Basle to Kasparov. Neither surprise nor disgrace in that — but the margin was an alarming $\frac{1}{2}$-$5\frac{1}{2}$. Miles had winning chances in the first game (before losing it) and boldly spurned a draw in the second (ditto). I think even in an ideal world we would have to concede the third and fifth games to Kasparov. The final game is a different story. Superficially it looks like the world champion crushing Tony with an effective new move, but a critical analysis suggests that Kasparov's play was very risky.

Miles-Kasparov, 6th match game, Basle 1986. QGD, Semi-Slav.
1. d4 d5 2. c4 c6 3. Nc3 Nf6 4. e3 e6 5. Nf3 Nbd7 6. Bd3 dxc4 7. Bxc4 b5 8. Bd3 a6 9. e4 c5 10. e5 In the last 20 years 10. d5 has been standard, but this older move is now coming back into fashion. **cxd4 11. Nxb5 Ng4!?** A very interesting choice. Both 11 . . . Nxe5 and 11 . . . axb5 have better reputations. In the 4th game Miles played 12. Nbxd4, which got him the draw that averted a whitewash. Now he tries what is supposed to be the strongest line for White. **12. Qa4 Ngxe5 13. Nxe5 Nxe5 14. Nd6 +** 14. Nc7 + + Ke7 15. Nxa8 Nxd3 + 16. Ke2 Ne5 17. Qb4 + Ke8 18. Qb6 is supposed to favour White, according to analysis by Korchnoi in *ECO*. Presumably Kasparov has grounds for dissenting. **Ke7 15. Nxc8 + Kf6!?** A TN. In earlier games immediate recapture on c8 gave White the advantage after both 15 . . . Rxc8 16. Bxa6 and 15 . . . Qxc8 16. Qxd4. Now it looks as if Kasparov is ready to meet 16. Bxa6 with 16 . . . Nd3 + 17. Kf1 Nc5. But then comes 18.Qc6! and, since 18 . . . Rxa6 gets mated after 19. Qf3 + Kg6 20. Qg4 +, Black is reduced to 18 . . . Qd5 19. Qxd5 exd5 20. Nb6 Rxa6 21. Nxd5 +, which must surely be good for White. **16. Be4 Rxc8 17. h4? h6 18. 0-0** To justify his 17th move White would need to play 18. Bg5 + here, but it doesn't work out well: 18. Bg5 + hxg5 19. hxg5 + Kxg5 20. Rxh8 Rc4! 21. Rxf8 Qxf8 and the threats of . . . Rxa4, . . . Qb4 + and . . . d3 give Black a clear initiative. So it would have been better to play just 17. 0-0. **Rc4 19. Qd1 d3 20. Re1 Rxc1! 21. Rxc1 d2 22. Rf1 Qd4!** Now Black wins material and the fight is over. 23. Rc2 Qxe4 24. Rxd2 Bc5 25. Re1 Qxh4 26. Qc2 Bb4 27. Rxe5 Bxd2 28. g3 Qd4 29. Re4 Qd5 0-1.

By contrast the margin in the Speelman-Alburt transatlantic match of champions could hardly have been narrower. We broke off last week with Alburt having salvaged a draw from a wreck of a position in game 5. He went on to win game 6. A draw in the penultimate game left Jon Speelman 3-4 down and obliged to play for a win with Black in the final game:

Alburt-Speelman, 8th match game, London 23 May 1986.
1. Nf3 b6 2. d4 Bb7 3. g3 g6 4. Bg2 Bg7 5. 0-0 Nf6 6. c4 e6 7. Nc3 Ne4 8. Nxe4 Bxe4 9. Bg5 Qc8 10. Qd2 h6 11. Bf4 You could call this a Queen's Indian of sorts, though the opening sequence doesn't fit any of the standard classifications. Jon thought 11. Be3 was more solid. **d6 12. Ne1 Bxg2 13. Kxg2 Qa6 14. b3 Nc6 15. Be3 Ne7 16. f3 c5 17. Nc2 Rd8!** White has evidently gone wrong and can hardly hang on to his besieged d4 pawn. **18. a4 d5 19. cxd5 Rxd5 20. Bf2 cxd4 21. Nb4 Qa5 22. Rac1 0-0 23. Rfd1 Rc5** Hereabouts Black loses control and is unable to keep his extra pawn. **24. Rxc5 bxc5 25. Nd3!** Much better than 25. Nd5 Qd8. **Qb6 26. Qc2 Nd5 27. Qc4 Rc8 28. Rc1 Qd8 29. Nxc5 Qg5 30. h4 Ne3 + 31. Bxe3 Qxe3** With both players entering time-trouble the game becomes very tense. White has a potential distant passed pawn, but his King's position is fragile. **32. Rc2 Bf8 33. b4 a5 34. Qa6 d3!?** Hard to say whether this is objectively good, but it's certainly the best way of confusing the opponent. On first looking at the game I thought Lev could have forced a draw with 35. Qxc8 dxc2 36. Nd7, but Jon pointed out that 36 . . . Qxe2 + 37. Kh3 Qxf3 is winning for Black. **35. exd3 Rd8 36. Qxa5 Rd5 37. Qa8 Kg7 38. a5 Bxc5 39. bxc5 Qxd3 40. Rf2 Rxc5** White may be able to hold here after 41. Qe4 Qxe4 42. fxe4 Rxa5, but it would be a horrible endgame to defend. **41. Qa7 Rc1 42. g4?** However, it would have been better than this! **Qd1 43. Rb2 Qh1 + 44. Kg3 e5! 45. Qb8 Rg1 + 46. Kf2 Rf1 + 0-1.**

So 4-4. And the match was drawn? Not exactly. The terms of the 'match of champions', sponsored by Kleinwort Grieveson, required a winner. So Speelman and Alburt went on to play two 10-minute games by way of a sudden-death finish, and the US champion won them both.

George Botterill

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This England

£3 Book Tokens for entries printed (On postcards please.)

☐ A higher proportion of pupils leave school without qualifications in Wales than in any other region of England, according to Welsh Office figures. — *Western Mail* (C. C. Box)

☐ Miss Rye 1986 — Competition open to all females (no transvestites) aged 16 or over (OAPs whilst eligible are unlikely to win). Entry forms (which must be completed by 10pm on the night) available now. — *Rye & Rother Valley Round Table notice* (Neill Rogall)

☐ Whistling parrots Polly and Charlie, worth £350 each, have been stolen from their home at Natureland Zoo, Skegness. The African Grey parrots are grey with red tails and can whistle the Laurel and Hardy signature tune. — *Daily Telegraph* (Frank Purcell)

☐ Greater Manchester police were prepared to lower height requirements to admit members of ethnic communities to the force. People would be just as frightened of a 5ft 6in Gurkha as a 6ft 10in Masai. — the *Guardian* (Patrick Kelly)

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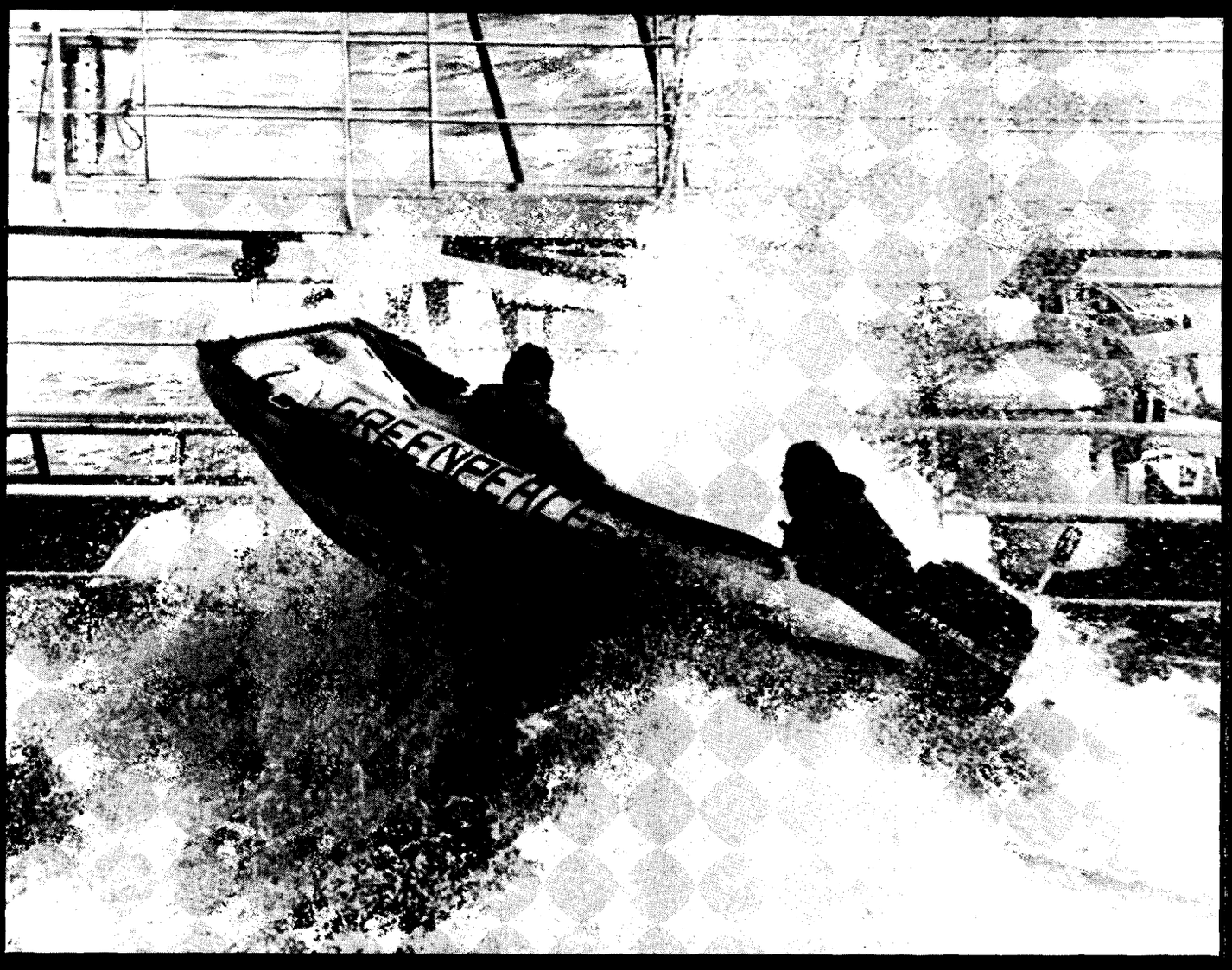

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